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**BETWEEN THE TEMPLE AND THE LIBRARY:  
THE JUDEO-HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHER  
ARISTOBULUS OF ALEXANDRIA**

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*To my beloved brother Chris, who  
inspired me to follow History and showed me  
the way through it.*

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*“ God alone, if He exists, who sees a pyramid from every angle at once, must be able to  
contemplate History like one and the same town looked at from different sides. ”*

*– Paul Veyne*

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## ABSTRACT

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This investigation concerns Aristobulus of Alexandria, a little known Judeo-Hellenistic philosopher, who probably lived during the mid-second century BCE in the multicultural capital of Ptolemaic Egypt. Aristobulus was responsible for pioneeringly pointing out similarities between Jewish religious conceptions and Greek philosophies in literature, proposing a synthetic allegorical approach on the Bible which pre-sets that of Philo of Alexandria, more famously known, almost two hundred years later. The study primarily seeks to provide a historical-biographical discussion on Aristobulus, seeking to understand who this poorly documented figure was, but also and most importantly, to connect it with a suitable historical context, understanding the philosopher within his own social and cultural setting. As many traditional studies of the nineteenth century have doubted the very existence of the Jewish philosopher, alleging his writings to be later forgeries, this study should help in the current process of erecting Aristobulus to the canons of Jewish historiography, giving a proper, contextual description of his historical features.

## RESUMO

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Esta investigação se debruça sobre Aristóbulo, um pouco conhecido filósofo judeo-helenístico que provavelmente viveu durante o segundo século a. C. na capital multicultural do Egito ptolomaico, Alexandria. Aristóbulo foi pioneiro em apontar semelhanças entre as concepções religiosas judaicas e as filosofias gregas na literatura, propondo uma abordagem alegórica e sintética à Bíblia, que pré-figura aquela do mais conhecido Fílon de Alexandria, quase duzentos anos depois. O estudo visa primariamente fornecer uma discussão histórico-biográfica de Aristóbulo, buscando entender quem era essa figura tão pouco documentada, mas também e mais importante, conectá-la a um contexto histórico adequado, entendendo o filósofo em seu próprio ambiente social e cultural. Como muitos estudiosos tradicionais do século XIX duvidaram da própria existência de Aristóbulo, alegando que seus escritos eram falsificações posteriores, este estudo deve ajudar no processo atual de elevação do personagem aos cânones da historiografia judaica, fornecendo uma descrição contextual de suas características históricas.

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## INTRODUCTION

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### THE TWIN PILLARS OF WESTERN SOCIETY

To the average modern reader, Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditional sources could not look more different, even after centuries along of miscegenation, intellectual trade and assimilation strategies between those peoples and religions to which they are tied to. At a first glimpse, the contrast between poetic and prosaic style, between a monotheistic and a polytheistic pantheon, and also between authoritarian and democratic power practices appears to argue firmly to the heterogeneity of those two cultural matrixes synthetized in Homeric epic and the Bible.

However, in a closer approach to these sources, the correlations that link those mythical and religious traditions easily jump to sight, in terms of common themes, shared theological references and resembling allegories. From cultural fathers, like Moses and Homer, to chaos-bringer female antagonists, such as Eve and Pandora, and even more objective religious aspects in common, such as anthropomorphism or history-conducting gods; much seems to point out for a mutuality relation, a historical dialogue which both Jews' and Greeks' mentalities were influenced by.

Actually, such prominence had the similitude between them since the remotest times<sup>1</sup> that the first attempts of comparative descriptions came to light already in the Hellenistic period, with the trailblazing works of Homeric scholars from the Great Library of Alexandria<sup>2</sup>, many of them Jewish thinkers residing at the city<sup>3</sup>. That was the case of

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- 1 See for instance Robert H. Pfeiffer, "Hebrew and Greeks before Alexander", *Journal of Biblical Literature* vol. 56, n. 2 (1937), pp. 91-101; or, in more generic words, Joseph Campbell, "The Monomyth" in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Novato: New World Library, 2008), p. 33. For similarities and dependencies between Jewish and Hellenic literature, see George Sarton, "Unity and Diversity of the Mediterranean World", *Osiris*, vol. 2 (1936), pp. 406-63; and Trebolle Barrera, "The Literary History of the Canon of Biblical Books" in *The Jewish Bible and the Christian Bible* (Cambridge: Brill, 1998), pp. 150-51.
  - 2 Cf. Maren Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in the Library of Alexandria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 77-129, for Jewish Homeric scholarship in Alexandria. For Alexandrian Greek approaches on Jewish literature, see also Nina Collins, *The Library in Alexandria & Bible in Greek* (Boston: Brill, 2000), pp. 115-181.
  - 3 Hellenistic Jewish authors "used various strategies which allowed them not just to avoid a radical rejection of Greek paideia but to actually integrate it into the hermeneutics of the Scriptures: if the same God is the ultimate source of both the Bible and of the individual traditions of folklore and wisdom of each nation, there should be some sort of correspondence" (Guy G. Stroumsa, "Scripture and *Paideia* in Late Antiquity" in Niehoff [ed.], *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of the Ancient Interpreters* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 31). George Sterling, "'Thus are Israel': Jewish Self-Definition in Alexandria" in *Studia Philonica Annual*, vol. 7 (1995), pp. 1-18: two main demands "constitute the horizons of Alexandrian Jewish self-identity: the necessity of maintaining allegiance to the ancestral tradition, and the right to

Aristobulus of Alexandria, Judeo-Hellenistic philosopher and allegorist responsible for some of those pioneer efforts, who had probably lived during the mid-second century BCE.

To Aristobulus and his fellow Alexandrian Jewish scholars, the intellectual environment of the Library, a multi-ethnic set of cultural oppositions and epistemological quarrels, sustained by the strain of dialogue<sup>4</sup>, meant an open doorway to the elevation of their cultural values to an aspect of supremacy<sup>5</sup>– which were then transmitted in Greek<sup>6</sup>, and thus to the world. Moreover, as it will be shown, that context was also the platform for the first steps of a project of conciliation between Jewish and Greek philosophies and theological narratives, precisely the essentials of Aristobulus’s work and thought, bequeathed to us in the form of only five fragments attributed to his authorship.

However, little known in historiography, the grecophone Alexandrian Jew<sup>7</sup> has proved to be persistently controversial as an object of study, being a matter of endless debates concerning his date, identity and interests<sup>8</sup>. Born and raised in the Alexandrian capital, Aristobulus synthesizes, in his own figure, the mythical and cultural dialogue between the Greek and Judaic civilizations, an enterprise more famously assigned to two of his successors,

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participation in Hellenism”. For Jewish philosophy in the Hellenistic diaspora, see John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Livonia: Dove Booksellers, 2000), pp. 186-209.

- 4 Wick & Rabens, *Religions and Trade: Dynamics in the history of religions* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), p. 12 assures, “interaction between Judaism and Hellenism in the trade centre of Alexandria was varied and included elements of assimilation, creative re-elaboration, and reaction. There was a strong element of reciprocity. Jews were attracted by the Hellenistic culture”. See also Arthur Droge, *Homer Or Moses?: Early Christian Interpretations of the History of Culture* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989); and J. M. Derrett, “A Moses-Buddha parallel and its meaning” in *Archiv Orientalní*, vol. LVIII (1990), pp. 310-317.
- 5 J. M. Barclay, “6.4 Aristobulus” in *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), p. 150 affirms that “the cultural claim, which appears in four of the five fragments [of Aristobulus], is the assertion that the Jewish 'school of thought' is both prior and superior to any Greek philosophy”. See also A. Droge, “The Interpretation of History Of Culture in Jewish-Hellenistic Historiography” in *SBL (1984) Seminar Papers* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984), pp. 135-6.
- 6 According to Niehoff, op. cit., p. 3, “they [Alexandrian Jews] not only spoke in Greek but quickly read their own Scriptures only in the Greek translation. Homer’s epics, which constituted the most important pillar of Greek education in Hellenistic Egypt, were obviously familiar to them”.
- 7 Adela Y. Collins, “Supplement: fragments of lost Judeo-Hellenistic works” in J. H. Charlesworth [ed.] *The Old Testament Pseudepigraphy*, vol. 2 [OTP 2] (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1985), p. 832: “there are no indications that the fragments were written originally in a language other than Greek, [... and] little evidence that Aristobulus knew Hebrew or Aramaic”.
- 8 Carl R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, vol. 3: *Aristobulus* [FrHJA 3] (Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1995), pp. 43-96: “even though only five relatively brief excerpts from his writings survive, they have been remarkably provocative”. See also A. Y. Collins, op. cit., pp. 831-42.



the allegorist Philo of Alexandria<sup>9</sup> and the historian Flavius Josephus, both of them also Hellenistic Jews.

As Adela Y. Collins notes, Aristobulus's single five fragments, preserved until our days only through quotes in later Christian compilations<sup>10</sup>, "seem to be part of an extended attempt to relate Jewish tradition to Hellenistic culture"<sup>11</sup>, in which verses from great classics of the Greek literature, such as Homer and Plato, are used to prove similarities and argue on dependencies between the Jews and Greeks<sup>12</sup>. In a few words, Aristobulus of Alexandria, more than two thousand years ago, dared to try and comprehend the correlations between Greek and Jewish cultures that still mesmerize scholars since nowadays.

The following study, for its turn, aims to comprehend the conditions of transmission of Aristobulus's fragmentary treatises and to locate them among Jewish and Greek thought traditions<sup>13</sup>, inducing thus, their social context of production. It is intended to, hopefully, provide a better picture of the philosopher's historical figure, elucidating his intellectual attitudes and intentions, and describing his conciliation project in terms of a social history of the Alexandrian Jewry's reception of Hellenism and the Greek cultural values.

Naturally, a meticulous reader may inquire this investigation in the choice for an integrated rather than isolated point of view regarding those societies, concerned with the potential losses on their singular aspects and differences. More humbly, as well, one could simply ask how could a digression of such depth in Antiquity reflect positively on modern societies of today and, of course, how we, contemporary people, could benefit from it.

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9 Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 B.C.E – c. 50 C.E.) is an Alexandrian Jewish allegorist, of great importance to early Christian tradition, who is responsible for further developing the arguments previously debated by Aristobulus, thoroughly elaborating on "the influence of Greek traditions on Judaism [...], representative of what is generally known as Hellenistic Judaism in distinction from Palestinian Judaism and its rabbinic traditions" (Jody V. Lewis, "Philo" in M. E. Ackermann, M. J. Schroeder, J. J. Terry, J. H. Lo Upshur & M. F. Whitters, *Encyclopedia of World History, vol. I: The Ancient World (Prehistoric Eras to 600 C. E.)* [New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008], p. 355).

10 Namely, in Clement's *Stromatha* 6.3.32.3-33.1; cf. T 5, in an indirect quotation by Anatolius (d. ca. 282) preserved in Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica* 7.32.14-19, and in Eusebius's *Praeparatio Evangelica* 8.9.38-10.18<sup>a</sup> and 13.11.3-12.16 (as indexed by Holladay), all dated from after second century CE.

11 A. Y. Collins, op. cit., p. 831.

12 Cf. Aristobulus apud Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 13.12.1 (Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 152-3). Additionally, J. J. Collins, op. cit., pp. 186-191 notes for instance that "as part of his apologetic enterprise, Aristobulus cites a number of verses from Greek poets to support the idea that the seventh day is holy", as in Jewish faith. On the use of Homeric verses to corroborate Scripture interpretation, see Kettel Berthelot, "Philo and the Allegorical Interpretation of Homer in the Platonic Tradition", in Niehoff [ed.], *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of the Ancient Interpreters* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 157-59.

13 Niehoff, op. cit., p. 133: "Aristotle's [metaphoric] approach had already been embraced by the Jewish philosopher Aristobulus". In addition, Barrera, op. cit., pp. 460-67 seems to place him beside Philo, Josephus in one and the same scholarly tradition of biblical interpretation, which is probably related to Stoic philosophical methods.

To both these questions, one simple answer might be found in the thoughtful words of the mythologist Joseph Campbell, which assert that an academic endeavor of this kind, conciliatory as it is, and synthetic as it might be, even though far away in time, “may contribute to the perhaps not-quite-desperate cause of those forces that are working in the present world for unification, not in the name of some ecclesiastical or political empire, but in the sense of human mutual understanding”<sup>14</sup>.

Indeed, if anything useful to us, Aristobulus’s philosophical discussions represent this project of intercultural and interethnic coexistence which, for its turn, comes alive in the Western Diaspora. In the political context of Ptolemaic Alexandria, the philosopher’s claims for similarity and anteriority of the Jewish values as they relate to Hellenistic culture, first of all, are to be seen as intellectual efforts on the struggle for equal rights and same citizenship status as Hellenes for the Jewish community of the city. With just the right amount of reflection, the incursion into such an object could well set it as an example for current and future generations to build from.

Between Jews and Greeks, if we edge further, we’re faced with two of the most influential blocks in the basis of modern world, those which were responsible for launching the foundations of our scientific, religious and political thought, hence it is no overstatement to recall them as the great twin pillars of Western Society. The intercultural elucidation that follows, if effective, must hopefully be an inspiration for this society to reconcile its differences in the present as did Aristobulus in a distant past. The author sincerely hopes that this work serves as an argument against any kind of racial purism or cultural prejudice today, emphasizing the universal spirit of human rights.

Our investigation will endeavor in a historical-biographical approach on Aristobulus of Alexandria, seeking to understand who this little known figure was and to definitely connect it with a suitable historical context. Moreover, as many traditional studies of the nineteenth century have doubted the existence of the Jewish philosopher, alleging his writings to be later forgeries – a consensus that has been changing only in the last fifty years or so –, most scholars of the field remain unaware of him. Thus, if successful, this study should help erect Aristobulus to the canons of Jewish historiography, as the pioneer works of a whole new generation of scientists are accomplishing to do.

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14 Campbell, *op. cit.*, p. xxii.

## CHAPTER I

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### EXTERNAL CRITICISM AND AUTHENTICITY ISSUES

The present research deals with the writings of Aristobulus, a Jewish philosopher who allegedly flourished in the mid-second century BCE and worked among the scholars of the Great Library of Alexandria, where he was born. Aristobulus pioneered addressing the mythical, philosophical and historical similarities between Jews and Greeks during the mass-dissemination of Hellenistic culture throughout the last centuries BCE. A scarcely known historical figure though, the Alexandrian Jew has proved to be a persistently controversial object of study, being a matter of endless debates concerning his historical character.

The controversy about Aristobulus's life and work is probably due to three initial problems about his writings as objects of research:

1) *the problem of authenticity* of the writings, sustained by the incoherence between the testimonies available on Aristobulus, repeatedly pointed out in scholarly analyses, and the various critical difficulties over his date, location and social context;

2) *the problem of documentation and textual transmission*, that is, the losses of knowledge due to our limited access of the source, through short fragmentary excerpts joint together in quotations of later authors, who inevitably add extra layers of intentionality to the work; and finally,

3) *the problem of the historical character*, which allegedly implies anachronism, since many have argued that his provocative writings, his philosophical strategies and his social profile appear much ahead of his testified time and social context.

Since Aristobulus's writings do not provide any information about the philosopher himself but rather about the intercultural context of Ptolemaic Alexandria within which he flourishes and his philosophical enterprise of synthesis between Jewish culture and Hellenistic philosophies, the present investigation will discuss each of these problems before it reaches the source *per se*, minding first for its externalities. The reader should be warned that, in choosing this particular order of work, we are opting for an inductive approach on the documentation, starting from an external criticism on the fragments, passing through a careful study on the intentionality and the testimoniality present in their recensions and, only then, ending with the actual historical analysis of their text.

As one can infer, that means that Aristobulus social character and context are not going to be further described with basis in bibliography, but rather progressively understood via documental criticism – things tend to get really obscure before they become clear. That said, in this first bibliographical reviewing section of our discussion, we will deal with the first problem, the matter of the source’s authenticity which, we anticipate, for most scholars nowadays, is deemed as solved, thankfully in favor of Aristobulus’s existence.

## 1. The problem of authenticity

Before we can even approach Aristobulus’s writings as an object of study, one major problem arises in front of us: their authenticity, a deep concern in the study of these fragments and their recensions, which comes along with many external criticism matters, such as authorship, dating, placing etc. As Adela Y. Collins argues in her general treatment of Aristobulus’s hermeneutical achievement<sup>1</sup>,

so conflicting is the testimony about him that modern scholars have doubted his existence; proposed dates for him ranging from the second century BCE to the third century CE; variously identified him as pagan, Jewish and Christian; suggested as possible provenances Alexandria, Jerusalem, Caesarea, Philippi and Cyprus.<sup>2</sup>

The questions over authenticity were matters of great controversy in modern scholarship’s criticism for a long time, entertaining endless debates. In order to clarify our framework, it is imperative to provide a summary comprehension of the past studies on the field. Must we, then, specifically approach the main modern interpretations of Aristobulus’s writings, revisiting the arguments for denial or acceptance of the fragments’ reliability, that is, the pros and cons for assuming Aristobulus was indeed the person testified by the sources:

**1.1. Authenticity denialists.** From their very start, in the late seventeenth century, modern scholarly debates which brought up Aristobulus’s fragments as academic matter were essentially concerned with questioning their authenticity. Claiming those philosophical commentaries could not have been composed by a Jewish Hellenistic author from the second century BCE, many scholars, exceptionally Philonists, argued on forgeries and dependencies on later texts, in “a tradition of skepticism that proved to be widely influential”<sup>3</sup>.

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1 A Y. Collins, “Supplement: fragments of lost Judeo-Hellenistic works” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigraphy*, vol. II, J. H. Charlesworth [ed.] (New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1985), pp. 831-42.

2 Ibid., p. 831.

3 Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 50.

In 1695, the theologian Humphrey Hody, Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford by that time, was one of the first responsables<sup>4</sup> for seriously raising doubts and objections against the authorship of Aristobulus's fragments, although he was concerned with another object of study – not something unusual when it comes to Aristobulus, as it will become clear. Speaking against scholars who defended the legitimacy of the *Letter of Aristeas*<sup>5</sup>, a pseudonymous work describing the translation of the Hebrew Bible in Greek, based on Aristobulus's allegedly previous accounts. Hody not only contrarily proposes the dependence of Aristobulus's fragments on the *Letter*, but also up-brings doubts concerning his very existence, even though the Jew is addressed in the salutation of a letter to the Jews of Egypt contained in the second book of Maccabees<sup>6</sup>, his most irreverent and, seemingly, only contemporary testimony.

According to Holladay, the theologian's thesis follows two lines of argumentation: first, suggesting a later date for the production of the LXX, against the *Letter*'s reference to the time of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, Hody automatically argues against the genuineness of Aristobulus since he asserts the same date<sup>7</sup>, at least in the excerpts preserved by Eusebius<sup>8</sup> –

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- 4 Hody had published his *Contra historiam Aristae de LXX interpretibus dissertatio* in 1685. In that same year, Richard Simon independently expressed similar doubts in his compendium *Histoire*; see R. Simon, *Histoire*, Bk. 2, ch. 2, p. 189 and Bk. 3, ch. 23, pp. 499-501 (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1685). Hody later noted Simon's accounts in his 1705 edition.
- 5 The *Epistle (Letter) of Aristeas*, today known as one of the most important works of Jewish pseudepigraphy, contains a mythological account on the origins of the LXX, presumably during the time of King Ptolemy II Philadelphus (283–246 BCE); “it claims that seventy-two bilingual Jews from Palestine traveled at royal invitation and expense to Alexandria [...] for the purpose of translating the books of the Law [that is, the Pentateuch] into Greek” (VanderKam, J. “Texts, titles, and translations”. In S. Chapman & M. Sweeney [eds.], *The Cambridge Companion to the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*, pp. 9-27. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016). For a complete translation and treatment of the letter, see R. Schutt, “Letter of Aristeas”, *The Old Testament Pseudepigraphy*, vol. II, J. H. Charlesworth [ed.] (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1985), pp. 9-34.
- 6 The biblical testimony in *II Maccabees* 1:10 is the foreword of a letter destined to the Jews in Ptolemaic Egypt, which greets the philosopher as king Ptolemy's Jewish “teacher” or “instructor”, as coming from a “blessed priestly family” and a part of the community of “Jews in Egypt”. A more careful analysis of the testimony found in *II Maccabees* will be presented in the fifth chapter of this discussion.
- 7 In Eusebius *P. E.* 13.12.2, Aristobulus's third fragment affirms purely that “the complete translation of everything in the law [*sic*] occurred at the time of the king surnamed (or *called by*) Philadelphus”. In Clement's *Strom.* 1.22.148.1 though, the same excerpt reads as “the Scriptures both of the law [*sic*] and the prophets were translated from the dialect of the Hebrews into the Greek language in the reign of Ptolemy the son of Lagus [Soter], or according to some, in the time of Ptolemy surnamed Philadelphus”. Assuming Eusebius's probable dependence on Clement, some doubt is raised over Aristobulus's actual agreement with the date testified in the *Letter of Aristeas*. It is likely, though, that the appositive contained in Clement is itself a later forgery; cf. Lodewijk C. Valckenaer, *Diatribes de Aristobulo Judaeo; philosopho peripatetico alexandrino* (Lugdunum Batavorum: Luchtmans, 1806), §§18-19, pp. 52-58..
- 8 The assertive that connects Demetrius' supervision with the reign of Philadelphus is also presented only in Fragment three as preserved by Eusebius (*P.E.* 13.11.3-12.1). As seen above, in the passage preserved in Clement (*Strom.* 1.22.148), the time of Ptolemy I Soter (son of Lagus) is also addressed as a possibility. Even assuming Clement's additions are forgeries, one may simply argue that the presence of wrong information in its text is not sufficient to assert the falseness of a document.

the main reason why Hody defends his dependence on Pseudo-Aristeas. Moreover, pointing out that Aristobulus affirms that Demetrius of Phalerum had supervised the LXX's production under the reign of Philadelphus, Hody argues that it was not reliable since a Hermippus' report in Diogenes Laertius points out to the enmity between the king and the librarian<sup>9</sup>. This actually has been traditionally understood as the reason for Demetrius' exile.

Second, Hody noted what is maybe the major problem against Aristobulus's authenticity: the total absence of any mentions in writings earlier than the second century CE, nearly three hundred years after his time. More disturbingly yet, he underlined the failure of Jewish and Christian authors to notice him in any works prior to Clement<sup>10</sup>, especially Josephus and Philo, who would naturally have interest in the philosopher's arguments, implying the possibility for them to be Christian forgery. Nonetheless, it must be recalled that when it comes to Antiquity studies and fragmentary sources, the absence of historical records throughout a certain period does not necessarily imply the complete silence of the tradition – in last case, it proves nothing at all.

Although Hody appears unaware of Clement's recension, likely having had access to Aristobulus's work only through Eusebius, to which he does not seem to pay much attention, his arguments were repeatedly reproduced and improved over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The negationist controversy start by Hody has led to absurdity under the works of scholars like Eichhorn (1793)<sup>11</sup>, Kuenen and Drummond (1869-1870)<sup>12</sup> and, with special emphasis, by Lobeck (1829)<sup>13</sup>, all of them also not surprisingly occupied with objects of study other than Aristobulus. The latter, concerned with the dating of the Orphic poems, one of which is allegedly quoted by Aristobulus in three different versions<sup>14</sup>, even dared to place him

9 Diogenes Laertius, viz. "Demetrius", *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 5:78 in R. D. Hicks [transl.], Loeb Classical Library, n. 5.5 [LCL 5.5] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925).

10 For a critical approach on the silence of the Judeo-Christian tradition concerning Aristobulus, see Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 63-72.

11 V. J. G. Eichhorn, *Allgemeine Bibliothek der biblischen Litteratur*, vol. 5 (Leipzig: Weidmann, 1793), pp. 247, 253-98.

12 A. Kuenen, *De Godsdiens van Israël tot den Ondergang van den Joodschen Staat*, vol. 2 (Haarlem: A. C. Kruseman, 1869-70), pp. 398, 433-36. Drummond, J., *Philo Judaeus, or the Jewish Alexandrian Philosophy in its Development and Completion*, vol. 1 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1888), pp. 169, 242-55.

13 C. A. Lobeck, *Aglaophamus, sive, De theologiae mysticae Graecorum causis*, bk. i, pt. 2 (Königsberg: Borntraeger, 1829), pp. 438-65.

14 The problem concerning Aristobulus's quotation of an Orphic poem is that it appears in three different forms, respectively, two alternative short forms in Clement and in unattributed passage of Pseudo-Justin's *De Monarchia* (M. Marcovich [ed.], "Pseudo-Iustinus. Corhortatio ad Graecos, De Monarchia, Oratio ad Graecos", book II in *Patristische Texte und Studien* 32 [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1990]), and a longer and more complex form in Eusebius; much seems to indicate that Lobeck was strictly dependent on Eusebius's version for his analysis; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 447-48.

after Clement, as a later Christian author, roughly overlooking the fact that Clement cites him by name in his work<sup>15</sup>.

The skepticism of the denialists edges yet further in the late nineteenth century, with the generation of scholars represented by Elter (1894-95)<sup>16</sup> and Willrich (1895)<sup>17</sup>, who both agree with and reunite Hody's and Lobeck's arguments. Concerning more explicitly about the philosopher himself, Elter elaborates on the links between Aristobulus and Philo in order to demonstrate the former's dependence on the latter. Later, under Elter's request, his successor Wendland summarizes all the prior accounts against Aristobulus's authenticity and expands his defense of the philosopher's dependence on Philo<sup>18</sup>.

Subsequently, Willrich dedicated a brief treatment Aristobulus in his discussion on origins of the LXX, upbringing the incoherence between the testimonies and the account on Aristobulus contained in II Maccabees 1:10, as well as the silence of Josephus<sup>19</sup> about his presumably prominent figure among the Alexandrian Jews. Reinforcing the latter's arguments, Willrich insisted that those problematic Greek fragments were actually pseudonymous, placing this hypothetical "Pseudo-Aristobulus" as "a contemporary of Philo of Alexandria [...] that flourished in Jerusalem sometime in the first century CE"<sup>20</sup>.

Throughout the twentieth century, the doubts concerning Aristobulus's authenticity continue<sup>21</sup> to be raised, but the case advances little further on solid argumentation, especially since most of it seemed largely a desperate attempt to prove the priority of other later writings or, more strictly, the originality of Philo – even though Philo's full-developed system of allegorical interpretation looks unlikely to be as pioneer as alleged<sup>22</sup>. Nevertheless, future

15 Specifically in *Strom.* 6.3.32.3-33.1.

16 A. Elter, *De Gnomologiorum Graecorum historia atque origine commentatio* (Bonn: E.C. Georgi Typographeo Academico, 1893), pts. 5-9 (*de Aristobulo Iudaeo* 1-5), cols. 149-255.

17 H. Willrich, *Juden und Griechen vor der makkabäischen Erhebung* (Göttingen : Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895), pp. 162-68.

18 The results of Wendland's research were incorporated to later editions of Elter's work. He additionally explains that Aristobulus's argument that the Greek sages derived their wisdom from the Bible is much later than the second century BCE and that the sketchy features of his work are better understood under a complex Philonic system. See Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 52-53.

19 For the silence of the Jewish tradition on Aristobulus, see Holladay, op. cit., pp. 63-4.

20 Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 53-4.

21 See, for instance, the works of Émile Bréhier, *Les idées philosophiques et religieuses de Philon d'Alexandrie* (3rd. ed., Paris: Alphonse Picard, 1950), pp. 46-49; and Moses Hadas, *Aristeas to Philocrates: The Letter of Aristeas* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1974), pp. 26-27.

22 Philo's complex structures of argumentation and the fact that he addresses anonymous colleagues who elaborated on the same matters suggest the preexistence of an academic framework in Alexandrian Jewish allegory, a long previous tradition. D. Runia & A. Galjon, *Philo of Alexandria On Planting: Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), p. 10: "there is ample evidence that Philo's allegorical method is rooted in Jewish exegetical practices that were developed in Alexandria in preceding centuries, [for which] an important witness is the Jewish author Aristobulus (second century BCE)".

advances in the field proved that both Hody's and his successors' arguments can be summarily criticized with a careful intertextual analysis of Aristobulus's work *and its versions*, treating them as the main subject rather than just a subchapter in apart histories.

**1.2. Aristobulus's defense.** On the other hand of the scholar tradition on Aristobulus of Alexandria, the main stands for the authenticity of his fragments had also been stuck to discussions about other sources, such as the LXX and the *Letter of Aristeas*. Thus they had remained until early nineteenth century when, opposing the scholar trend initiated by Hody, Valckenaer wrote his *Diatribes de Aristobulo Judaeo* (1806)<sup>23</sup>, the earliest full work in defense of the fragments' authenticity, emphasized for its singular focus on Aristobulus. Valckenaer regards II Maccabees 1:10 definitively as reliable evidence to date Aristobulus's work during the reign of Ptolemy VI Philometor, admitting fundamental flaws in Anatolius's testimony<sup>24</sup>.

Asserting thus a clearer date for the Jewish philosopher, mid-second century BCE, Valckenaer argues for direct usage of his writings by the Church fathers for apologetic reasons – more notably by Clement, but also by Eusebius and even Anatolius<sup>25</sup>. Indeed, if one should consider Valckenaer's argument of recurrent use of the fragments for Christian apology, that would imply an aspect of social recognition which would, on its own, stand against a later date, since their common acceptability and wide dissemination within Christianity would most likely require some time distancing.

As for the fact that Aristobulus is not mentioned by the Judeo-Christian tradition before Clement, Valckenaer also lays down some of the arguments against authenticity simply by stating that documental silence proves nothing<sup>26</sup>. He was the first to actually notice that neither Philo nor Josephus are wont to mention his predecessors – the latter, more curiously yet, also “forgets” to mention the former<sup>27</sup>. Valckenaer also argues against Hody's claims of unauthenticity because of the fragments' testimony on the date of the LXX, asserting that Demetrius could have worked on the translation during the early part of the reign of Philadelphus, before falling out of favor with the king<sup>28</sup>.

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23 Lodewijk C. Valckenaer, *Diatribes de Aristobulo Judaeo; philosopho peripatetico alexandrino* (Lugdunum Batavorum: Luchtmans, 1806).

24 Ibid., §9, pp. 24-27.

25 Ibid., §§3-4, pp. 8-13.

26 Ibid., §8, pp. 22-24.

27 Idem. As a secondary argument, one may also correctly assume that there might have been other testimonies which occasionally perished due to the passing of time since; in a few words, as Valckenaer argues, a documentary gap, especially when it comes to Antiquity, indeed proves nothing.

28 Cf. Ibid., §§18-19, pp. 52-58.



Moreover, regarding the presence of pseudo-Orphic verses in the fragments, Valckenaer proposes that Aristobulus, in order to support his arguments that Greeks derived their wisdom from Jews, would have himself composed the full final redaction of the Orphic poem attributed to the Greeks<sup>29</sup>. Generally speaking, it must be remarked that Valckenaer's approach was suit to apologetic concerns, clearing the Christian preservers of charges, rather accusing Aristobulus himself of forgery. His work became, however, specially dominant in the field throughout the nineteenth century, and not surprisingly, once his research gave detailed responses to all the problems and discrepancies pointed out by the overly skeptical approach of Hody and his followers, who inaugurated the debates.

By the turn of the twentieth century, linguistic evidence and philological analyses on the source led to more affirmative responses to the claims for Philo's anteriority<sup>30</sup> compared to Aristobulus, as well as to most of the concerns raised before. By then, Schürer (1901-11)<sup>31</sup> insisted that the excerpts were authentic and derived from a Jewish author during the time of Ptolemy VI Philometor, developing further argumentation against Lobeck's claims of Aristobulus's dependence on the later Orphic poem<sup>32</sup>.

Subsequently, in agreement with Valckenaer's dating, Zeller (1921-23)<sup>33</sup> argued for the authenticity of the fragments proposing a date ca. 150 BCE for Aristobulus. He also turns down the problems over the mention of Philadelphus in Clement's preserved testimony (*Strom.* 5.14.97.7), identifying the epithet Φιλάδελφον (Philadelphus) as an honorary title of large and well-documented use to address Ptolemaic kings and queens<sup>34</sup> during that time. Such a title, as explained before, might well have been used in different passages by Clement to refer Philometor himself rather than his ancestral Philadelphus – this most likely being the reason for his confusion in Frg. 3b (*Strom.* 1.22.148.1).

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29 Ibid., §§21-28, pp. 61-89.

30 See for instance R. Keller, *De Aristobulo judaeo* (Bonn: Phil. Diss., 1948), p. 79 and E. Stein, "Die allegorische Exegese des Philo aus Alexandria", in *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft (BZAW) 51* (Giessen: A. Topelmann, 1929), pp. 6-11.

31 E. Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, vol. 3 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1901-11), pp. 517-19.

32 Valckenaer and Schürer suggest that Aristobulus actually quoted a shorter version of the Greek verses, similar to the ones cited by Ps.-Justin and Clement, and that the more complex form of the Orphic poem presented in Eusebius was a later and extended recension, likely dependent on the others; cf. A. Carriker, *The Library of Eusebius of Caesarea* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003), p. 157.

33 E. Zeller, "Die nacharistotelische Philosophie", in *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* [1921-23], vol 3 (6th ed.; Hildesheim: Olms, 1963), ch. 2, pp. 73-112.

34 Ibid., p. 281; cf. Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 72; and notes in p. 90. Graetz previously argues that the eponym Φιλάδελφον was an "ironic nickname" in reference to Philometor's ancestor, but drops the argument later.

Finally, far the most complete and definitive case in behalf of Aristobulus's authenticity, Walter's 1964 dissertation *Der Thoraausleger Aristobulos*<sup>35</sup> "was a penetrating analysis of each of the objections against authenticity and a thoroughly informed interpretation of Aristobulus within the context of Ptolemaic Egypt"<sup>36</sup>. As did Willrich in Lobeck's succession, Walter again summarized all arguments against the philosopher's validity, but now rigorously criticized them, developing the prior analyses pro-authenticity to their state of art.

Closer attention is now given to the intellectual and social environment of the philosopher, once Walter seeks to comprehend Aristobulus within the larger picture of Alexandrian intellectual circles<sup>37</sup>, clarifying his relation to the Ptolemaic court and his status as the king's teacher, as attested by II Maccabees. Walter argues that Aristobulus stood at the beginning of the Jewish allegorical tradition which emerged in Alexandria, the same to which Philo would later subscribe. However, speaking against the prior claims for Aristobulus's dependence on the latter, Walter purposes a "de-Philonizing" of Aristobulus, arguing that the philosopher "must not always be read through Philonic lens"<sup>38</sup> since, although they drew a common tradition, each appropriated the Alexandrian philosophical features in their own ways and reflected different stages of development.

The most innovative feature of Walter's thesis was to recognize and explain the provocative or ahead-of-time aspects of Aristobulus's mindset, the major problem raised against the historical reliability of his figure, as a natural derivation from both his Jewish heritage and his indebtedness to Hellenistic philosophies. While defining Aristobulus's faith and his view of God within the clear profile of the Jewish Diaspora in the West, aside with Aristarchus for instance, he also identifies Stoic elements in the philosopher's rhetoric similar to the hermeneutics of Pergamum school, judging him as a "Stoic" if understood in a wider sense, but rather an eclectic<sup>39</sup>.

In terms of date, moreover, based on a thorough textual analysis of the Pseudo-Orphic poem quoted by Aristobulus in Frg. 4, Walter locates the philosopher's work once again, now definitively, during the time of Ptolemy VI Philometor (180-145 BCE)<sup>40</sup>. Similarly, Walter

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35 Nikolaus Walter, *Der Thoraausleger Aristobulos: Untersuchungen zu seinen Fragmenten und zu pseudepigraphischen Resten der jüdisch-hellenistischen Literatur* (TU 86; Berlin: Akademie, 1964).

36 Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 58.

37 Walter, op. cit., pp. 124-49.

38 Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 60.

39 Ibid., p. 59.

40 Walter, op. cit., pp. 172-261. Cf. Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 60-1.

criticizes the arguments of dependence on the *Letter of Aristeas* and the Orphic poem, however, providing a detailed textual history of the latter<sup>41</sup>, he disagrees with Valckenaer that Aristobulus would have composed the Pseudo-Orphic verses himself. He rather insists that, because of the visible stylistic differences between the excerpts and the passages actually authored by Aristobulus, the philosopher indeed would have originally quoted a form of the verses, but those which appear in Clement and similarly in Ps.-Justin are later parallel recensions, those in Eusebius being an even later post-Clementine version<sup>42</sup>.

Overall, providing magistral developments to Valckenaer's seminal work, Walter's dissertation have been outstandingly influential in the field, to such a degree that, for many scholars, "Walter's investigation effectively resolved the authenticity question"<sup>43</sup> – as we too must assume from now on. In sum, we are left with some clear historical data: Aristobulus lived in the first half of the second century BCE at Alexandria, where he was born and became a renowned philosopher, maybe actually a participant of Philometor's close circles at some point, being especially important among the Jewish community of the Egyptian city – referred to as a major authority in *II Maccabees* on behalf of that.

Those last great advances on the philological and text critical analysis of the source were so pivotal that they indeed established the authenticity of Aristobulus's fragments almost as a new orthodoxy, first fixing the philosopher's figure with a certain historical set – date, location and social profile. However, although Walter dedicated the most careful treatment to our fragments, in face of their suspiciousness, the past works actually did not answered many questions over of Aristobulus's historical character in association with its social context.

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41 Idem.

42 More will be outlined on the Pseudo-Orphic verses preserved in Aristobulus's fragment in the subsequent chapters, under the direct analysis of Fragment 4. See also E. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (California: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 248-50.

43 Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 61.

## CHAPTER II

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### DOCUMENTAL TYPOLOGY AND TEXTUAL TRANSMISSION

As one can easily conclude from the previous discussion, it was not until very recently that the scholars came to actually consider the Greco-Jewish fragments' authenticity, having matters concerning the identity and social context of their author been summarily neglected until late 1960's. In face of that, not only do we have to deal with many gaps in the historical knowledge about Aristobulus, which would naturally derive from the absence of a larger document series, but also with a profound disconnection, literal vacuums of interpretation, between the previous analyses on the writings and the historiographical commentaries on their alleged context. To that disconnection, we seek to hopefully provide clearer responses as we move forward to the next, actually historiographical, stages of this investigation.

With Walter's finding of the fragments' authenticity, a new object of research in social history unravels before us; an object that, although yet little known, have already entertained some outstanding works<sup>1</sup> on Ptolemaic Judaism and the Mediterranean Diaspora, a few of them actually centered on Aristobulus<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, there is still much to be answered regarding his political role in the Jewish community of Ptolemaic Alexandria, his intellectual position within the Library's scholarship and, especially, the social and cultural motivations for his project of philosophical synthesis and interethnic coexistence.

Having made the previous remarks over the scholarly criticism of the academic analyses on our object – and assuming his writings from now on to be definitely authentic – we are now allowed to properly start our own historiographical research on it, approaching the central aspects in the documental typology of the source and the subsequent stages of its textual transmission until our times.

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1 See, for instance, Maren Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in the Library of Alexandria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Livonia: Dove Booksellers, 2000); J. M. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996); and A. Droge, "The Interpretation of History Of Culture in Jewish-Hellenistic Historiography" in *SBL (1984) Seminar Papers* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984).

2 Santó Zsuzsanna, *The Jews of Ptolemaic Egypt in the Light of the Papyri*, Doctoral Thesis (Budapest: Történelemtudományi Doktori Iskola, 2016); and Livia Capponi, "Aristoboulos and the Hieros Logos of the Egyptian Jews", *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth International Congress of Papyrology* (Ann Arbor: American Studies in Papyrology, 2010), pp. 109-120.

## 2. The problem of documentation and textual transmission

As one can conclude from the past academic incursions on Aristobulus, when it comes to associate this narrow and problematic source with a specific time, place and social context, things tend to get really obscure.

**2.1. Documental features.** The literary legacy of Aristobulus of Alexandria is presented to us in the form of fragments, which were likely part of extended philosophical volumes or treatises. Such fragments were preserved, as introduced before, in the ecclesiastical works of the renowned Church fathers<sup>3</sup>, first by Clement, then by Anatolius and, more widely, by Eusebius, Christian apologetes of the second and third century CE.

The five fragments, as modernly organized by Holladay, are disposed as follows:

Fragment	Quoted by	Excerpt
Fragment 1	Anatolius apud Eusebius	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i> 7.32.14-19
Fragment 2	Eusebius	<i>Praeparatio Evangelica</i> 8.9.38-10.18a
Fragment 2a	Clement	<i>Stromateis</i> 6.3.32.3-4
Fragment 3	Eusebius	<i>P.E.</i> 13.11.3b-12.2 = <i>P.E.</i> 9.6.6-8
Fragment 3a; 3b	Clement	<i>Strom.</i> 1.22.150.1-3; 1.22.148
Fragment 4	Eusebius	<i>P.E.</i> 13.12.3-8
Fragment 4a	Clement	<i>Strom.</i> 5.14.99.3 = <i>P.E.</i> 13.13.21
Fragment 4b		<i>Protrepticus</i> 7.73.2a
Fragment 4c		<i>Strom.</i> 5.14.101.4b = <i>P.E.</i> 13.13.26
Fragment 5	Eusebius	<i>P.E.</i> 13.12.9-16
Fragment 5a		<i>Strom.</i> 6.16.137.4-138.4

3 For an overview on the Church Fathers in the light of our interests, see David T. Runia [ed.], *Philo and the Church Fathers: A Collection of Papers* (Leiden, Germany: Brill, 1995).

Fragment 5b	Clement	<i>Strom.</i> 6.16.141.7b-142.1
Fragment 5c		<i>Strom.</i> 6.16.142.4b; 144.3
Fragment 5d		<i>Strom.</i> 5.14.107.1-4; 108.1 = <i>P.E.</i> 13.13.34-35a
Fragment 5e	Eusebius	<i>P.E.</i> 7.13.7-14.1

Table 1: Distribution of Aristobulus’s fragments in Christian literature. Obs.: Note that Eusebius's *Praeparatio Evangelica* and *Historia Ecclesiastica*, and Clement’s *Stromateis* are respectively referenced by *P.E.*, *H.E.* and *Strom.*.

As shown above, Aristobulus’s work is only available in much later Christian literature, specifically dated from the second century CE onward, nearly three hundred years after the time of the philosopher as accounted by his testimonies, a centenary silence which becomes one of the main scholarly arguments against the historical authenticity of the fragments<sup>4</sup>. Such documental typology leave us faced with some methodological challenges: first, the scarcity and incompleteness of the information provided by any fragmentary source; second, the possible occurrence of later forgeries and selections in the preserved text; and finally, the multiple layers of intentionality and testimoniality<sup>5</sup> to be distinguished, not only derived from the original author of the writings, but also from their Christian preservers.

On the former aspect, as Meeus precisely argues, the gaps in fragmentary evidence bring methodological consequences to the research since, with this type of material, “a methodologically rigorous approach will obviously not result in the necessarily true reconstruction of the period”<sup>6</sup> or object of study. That is, since gaps in the documentation, on their own, prove nothing at all, endeavouring this kind of investigation, we incur the risk not to come out with any conclusive results at all, but rather a rigorous scientific discussion. Nevermind that, if we are committed to avoid conclusions which lack basis in the sources and cannot be verified, “we should resist the temptation to fill the gaps in our knowledge”<sup>7</sup>.

As to the latter aspects, it is important to keep in mind that, at each of their subsequent recensions, the fragments express distinct layers of intentionality, with respect to each of the

4 Cf.1 Holladay, op. cit., pp. 63-4.

5 The discussion over intentionality and testimoniality in documental typology is sistematically presented by J. Arostégui, *La Investigación Histórica: teoría y método* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2001), pp. 494-497.

6 Alexander Meeus, “What We do not Know about the Age of the Diadochi: The methodological consequences of the gaps in the evidence”, in V. A. Troncoso, E. M. Anson [eds.], *After Alexander: The Time of the Diadochi (323-281 BC)* (Oxford, Oakville: Oxbow Books, 2016), pp. 94-5.

7 Idem.

contexts under which they were selected to come to light. It is not naively that most-relevant Christian fathers, such as Eusebius, Anatolius and Clement, endeavour in the process of conservation and reproduction of Aristobulus's writings: they perform important, usually demonstrative, functions in each of their works.

One should not naturalize the multiple goals to which the text correspond in each layer of its literary transmission, since not only they might incur deliberate selections and forgeries, but also these later glosses affect the modern historical knowledge on it as a whole, especially when it comes to such little known source. Therefore, a more detained analysis must be made of the particular interests and institutional demands to which correspond each of the authors involved in the process of textual transmission, recurring occasionally to the intertextual study of the available versions in order to distinguish forgeries, additions and selections.

**2.2. Textual transmission.** That put, before we can reach the main core of our discussion, the historical character and the social context of Aristobulus, let us first briefly summarize the same aspects for his recensionists, minding the general differences in their preserved texts as well as their possible intentions, as Christian sages, in preserving and diffusing the Jewish's works within Church literature.

*2.2.1. Clement of Alexandria.* The ecclesiastical philologist Clement (c. 150 – c. 250) is responsible for the first mention of a Jewish author named Aristobulus in scholarly literature, being the closest record of the philosopher's life and writings aside of II Maccabees. Although Clement quotes significant portions of the fragments 2-5 in his apologetic volume, *Stromateis*, he assigns only two of them explicitly to Aristobulus (*Strom.* 6.3.32.3-33.1 = Frg. 2a; *Strom.* 1.22.148.1 = Frg. 3a), leaving several unattributed passages, which were later distinguished by Eusebius, scattered all around the work, mixed within his own argumentation.

Clement's testimony provides information about the physical nature and extent of Aristobulus's writings, so it is likely that he probably had access to the philosopher's full works, or at least to earlier recensions now unknown to us. Clement thus represents the starting point, the first layer of transmission of our fragments' textual history, almost three hundred year after their original redaction. One must naturally inquire, in face of such a centenary silence, whether Clement had actually composed the writings himself and invented

Aristobulus, establishing a connection to the figure mentioned in II Macc 1:10<sup>8</sup>, in order to provide authority to his own claims.

To such inquiries, as we have introduced in the first chapter, Valckenaer provides rather simple answers. He points out that neither Philo nor Josephus are wont to mention his predecessors<sup>9</sup> – the latter does not even mention the former, for example. Moreover, only shortly after Josephus' death, the Jewish community of Alexandria was eradicated by Trajan's army during the Kitos War of 115–117 CE, also known as the Diaspora Revolt<sup>10</sup>. Having reached productive age by the end of that same century, Clement was not only the first to quote Aristobulus's but also Philo's writings, for Christian purposes. It is likely, therefore, that Clement's recensions of the Jewish authors of the Library of Alexandria were part of a large effort of recuperation and rehabilitation of their works after the Judeo-Roman conflicts ceased to strike the city.

Probably born and raised in Greek culture and later converted to Christianity<sup>11</sup>, Clement's interests in preserving such treatises, together with those of Philo and other Jewish authors, have a double aspect: at one hand, the apologetic concern of establishing a text associating the Greek philosophical education with the teachings of the Scriptures; and at the other, the personal desire of justifying his own social, religious and intellectual trajectory. Thus, especially occupied with philosophical matters, much before becoming a Christian, Clement quotes, as Christian apology, fragments of the Aristobulus's work that repeatedly present allegorical arguments in defense of the priority of Jewish sagery over Greek philosophy and argue on the literary dependence of the latter on the former.

Moreover, along with Aristobulus and his "successors" in allegory, Clement is also a character who represents an important role in the Christian allegory according to the narrativa later forged by Eusebius. In the Eusebian testimony, Clement appears side by side with Philo

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8 As briefed before, not only as a teacher of king Ptolemy from a family of anointed priests, Aristobulus is referred to in II Maccabees 1:10 as a major authority, somehow a representant of the Jews in Egypt; full testimony in cf. Holladay [FrHJA 3], T1, p. 114=R. Hanhart [ed.], "Maccabaeorum liber II" in *Vetus Testamentum Graecum auctoritate academiae scientiarum göttingensis editum*, vol. IX, n. 2 [Göttingen LXX 9(2)] (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), p. 48=A. Rahlfs [ed.], *Septuaginta: id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes*, vol. 1 [LXX] (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979), p. 1100. See more on the biblibal testimony of II Maccabees in the fifth chapter of this investigation.

9 Valckenaer, *Diatrise de Aristobulo Judaeo; philosopho peripatetico alexandrino* (Lugdunum Batavorum: Luchtmans, 1806), §8, pp. 22-24.

10 Seth Schwartz, *The Ancient Jews from Alexander to Muhammad* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 92.

11 As stated by David T. Runia, "Clement of Alexandria", in *Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature, Volume 3: Philo in Early Christian Literature* (Boston, Leiden: Brill, 1993), pp. 132-33, "according to the tradition he [Clement] was born in Athens (probably around 145) and came from a pagan background".



as the ones whose works helped to “clarify the meaning of Moses’ writings” (την εν τοις Μωσέως γράμμασι διάνοιαν σαφηνίζουσι<sup>12</sup>), in a tradition of theological interpretation that, according to him, would be later followed by Justin, Origen and Theophilus of Antioch<sup>13</sup>.

Needless to say, although Eusebius later distinguishes a single tradition, these associations were mostly involuntary and each of them produced independently under distinct circumstances, specially the Jewish authors. Therefore, the explicit connections he makes are mostly fallacious, remarkably for not only linking Aristobulus and Philo together, but directly to the Christian writers, not surprisingly, in a teleological approach to intellectual history.

2.2.2. *Anatolius of Laodicea*. Another Christian writer, this one actually born and raised in Alexandria, but more notably the bishop of Laodiceia, Anatolius (early 3<sup>rd</sup> century – 283) was responsible for a second recension of Aristobulus’s writings. However, the only fragment immortalized by Anatolius (Frg. 1<sup>14</sup>), a rather objective discussion on the date of the Jewish Passover, shows us a different Aristobulus, with more material concerns, like calendar matters, and philosophical features apparently unknown to Clement, such as astronomical knowledge. If there is any kind of correspondence between Greek and Jewish cultures which is pointed out in this fragment, it is only occasionally and, moreover, the Aristobulus accounted here seem to be far and away both in time and social occupation from the one testified by all other sources.

Indeed, Anatolius's testimony represents another tradition of historical interpretation on Aristobulus than that assigned to both Clement and Eusebius which, for their turn, explicitly follow the testimony of II Maccabees, which regards him as a teacher to Ptolemy VI Philometor. Placing Aristobulus in the time of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, a distant antecessor of king Philometor, he associates him with the production of the Bible translation into Greek, known as the Septuagint (LXX), roughly a hundred years before the philosopher’s alleged time. Those interpretative differences with the other versions will be carefully analyzed in the next chapter of this discussion; for now, it is enough to say that they reflect the distinguished interests of those recensionists in the effort of preservation.

Prior to becoming one of the great lights of the Church, according to Eusebius's account, Anatolius "was requested by the citizens of Alexandria to establish there a school of

12 *P.E.* 11.23.12. (K. Mras [GCS 43.2], *Eusebius Werke, Band 8: Die Praeparatio Evangelica* [Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1954-56], p. 53.16).

13 Inowlocki, op. cit., p. 243.

14 Holladay [FrHJA 3], Frg. 1, pp. 128-133=Eusebius *H.E.* 7.32.14-19 (Schwartz [GCS 9(2)], pp. 722-724).

Aristotelian philosophy<sup>15</sup>. That was because, before his bishopric in Laodicea, Anatolius enjoyed considerable prestige at Alexandria, and was credited with a rich knowledge of Greek arithmetics, geometry, physics and astronomy<sup>16</sup>. Such a mental frame would certainly justify his particular interest in Frg. 1, which appears, for its turn, in the context of a larger treatise by Anatolius on time of the Paschal celebration. The bishop's preserved text is the only version available of the Anatolius's discussion on Passover, making it impossible to know if he makes any alterations in the redaction to suit his own arguments. However, since no other source cites the same fragment, although it is likely that Anatolius was aware of other compilations of fragments, he probably had direct access to the original works himself.

In resume, two distinguished paths of transmission raise independently within the Christian reconstruction of Aristobulus, one may be understood as a II Maccabees-Clement-Eusebius tradition and the other, for its turn, develops in the works of Anatolius and his counterparts. Even though there is no evidence of a source other than Clement to which Anatolius could have had access, the harsh incoherence between their accounts<sup>17</sup>, along with the absence in Clement of any mention to the Frg. 1 itself or to the astrophysical knowledge of Aristobulus, stand firmly for the textual independence of the excerpt, which may be something very significant to our matters, as we will see in the next chapter.

2.2.3. *Eusebius of Caesarea*. Finally, Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 265-339), educated as a Christian, nominated as the bishop of Caesarea, is the most complete compilation of Aristobulus's fragments. Likely having had access to the widest range of sources among the recensionists, maybe to versions even earlier than the ones we have, Eusebius is recalled as the most reliable recension of the Jewish author's writings. His approach notably differs from that of Clement, the first compiler of our philosopher's work, for the conciseness of his quotations which, according to Holladay, "adhere more closely to Aristobulus's original text, [while] Clement's are more paraphrastic and reflect stylistic improvements"<sup>18</sup>.

15 Eusebius *H. E.* 7.32.6. In Greek, τῆς Ἀριστοτέλους διαδοχῆς τὴν διατριβήν: "A school of the Aristotelian succession," or "order" (Schaff).

16 Omer Englebert, *Lives of the Saints*. (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1994), p. 256; cf. Eusebius *H. E.* 7.32.6.

17 Anatolius's description of Aristobulus, the only account for the philosopher presented by Eusebius in *Historia Ecclesiastica*, diverged considerably from Clement's accounts and Eusebius's own testimony preserved in *Praeparatio Evangelica*, which suggests that the latter had consciously ascribed himself to another tradition of interpretation; cf. Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 48.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 45.

Renowned as the father of Church History, in citing this so-called Hebrew writings, along with those of Philo and of other allegorists of the Law, the Christian was mostly concerned with the triple goal of: a) preparing the potential or newly converts to the Gospel, with special emphasis, the Greek ones; b) philosophically demonstrating Christianity's principles, and finally; c) providing a complete historical account for ecclesiastical developments and debates – these were actually the very subjects of his compendiums *Praeparatio Evangelica*, *Demonstratio Evangelica* and *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

For Sabrina Inowlocki<sup>19</sup>, those are also the reasons why Eusebius cites early Jewish philosophers such as Philo and Aristobulus, more explicitly, because of three respective functions performed by their writings in his context: a) a *theological* function, once their passages reproduce and explain Greek terminologies in Judeo-Christian tradition; b) an *apologetic* function, because their interpretations and arguments were easily appropriated in favour of Christianity; and c) a *historiographical* function, since they provide important historical information on the origins of Christianity.

Let us briefly explore each of these concerns in Eusebius's recension:

(a) First, about the theological features of those Jewish authors quoted by Eusebius, it is of his large interest that they “had operated a crucial synthesis between the Bible and Greek philosophy well before the Christians”<sup>20</sup>, a task magisterially endeavored in Aristobulus as we have seen and, more emphatically yet, in Philo. One major instance of that hermeneutical project of synthesis is their view on the Greek *Logos*, in Aristobulus, understood as the divine seven-fold principle of all human knowledge, and in Philo's allegory, identified with the Son of God, the angel of the Lord. A synthetic approach as such would be remarkably efficient in convincing Greek societies of the superiority of the Hebrew oracles (and thus of the Christian God) over their philosophy and poetry, especially since the aspects of Jewish faith and wisdom are presented not only in Greek language, but also in terms of the Greek philosophical knowledge, particularly those of the Platonism.

(b) Secondly, as to the apologetic use of the Jewish authors, Eusebius's line of reasoning consists in establishing a connection between the most elevated Greek philosophies and the Jewish traditional doctrines. To that apologetic approach, the works of the Jewish allegorists, notably their arguments on cultural dependencies between Jews and Greeks,

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19 Sabrina Inowlocki, “Eusebius's Use of the Jewish Authors' Citations in the *Apoideixis*” in *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors: His Citation Technique in an Apologetic Context* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006), p. 223-251.

20 Ibid., p. 223.

would be very useful. In that sense, Aristobulus's claims for the dependence of Plato and the Orphic tradition on the Hebrew scriptures<sup>21</sup> were thoroughly appropriated as a mean to subordinate Platonic philosophy to Christianity, presenting "the Gospel of Christ [... as] nothing but a superior form of Platonism"<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, in a strongly Hellenized view of the Christian religion, by quoting Aristobulus's relevant passages on dependence in the *Praeparatio*, Eusebius was also feeding his own defense of Christianity.

(c) Finally, when it comes to the historical importance given to those writers in Eusebius's work, it is especially significant that he regards Aristobulus and Philo as "Hebrews" rather than Jews as they actually are. The eponym is used to associate a seminal authority to those Jews as the legitimate ancestors of Christianity, as Christian patriarchs for short<sup>23</sup>. Such a usage of "Hebrew" is a derivation of the very permanence of Jewish societies throughout the Christian Era, and the subsequent demands for distinction between their beliefs and those of the Christians. Eusebius establishes thus a historical continuity between the tradition performed by those Jewish writers and the Christian tradition of his time, using the references to Hebraic antiquities as means of legitimization of the new religion.

In spite of his deep interests, Eusebius is deemed the most reliable version of our fragments, he "appears to quote these fragments directly from Aristobulus's own work, but he also knows Aristobulus via Clement"<sup>24</sup>, explicitly referring to his testimony and transmitting some quotes of the philosopher directly from him. Not by coincidence, Eusebius's recension is not only the closest to the original text but also the most complete, it reunites all known fragments of Aristobulus: it encompasses all Clement's quotations and, very remarkably, fully preserves the testimony of Anatolius in Frg. 1 with all its inconsistencies, indicating its reliability when it comes to potential forgeries. Distinct not only for its completeness though, Eusebius's compilation gives the fragments some sort of unified sense, his testimony is the most informing one about Aristobulus, and he relates the philosopher to an extended list of authors who defended similar ideas, not only Philo and Josephus, but also Demetrius, Eupolemus and Numenius, for instance.

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21 In Frg. 3 Aristobulus states explicitly that φανερόν ὅτι κατηκολούθησεν ὁ Πλάτων τή καθ' ἡμᾶς νομοθεσίᾳ, καὶ φανερός ἐστι περιεργασμένος ἕκαστα τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ, which translates as "it is clear that followed the tradition of the law that we use and he is conspicuous for having worked through each of the details contained in it" (*P.E.* 13.11-12.1 = Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 152-153).

22 S. Inowlocki, op. cit., p. 227.

23 Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 237-241.

24 Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 45.

## CHAPTER III

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### TESTIMONIES OF THE RECENSIONISTS AND PHILOSOPHICAL FEATURES

After the introductory documental study above, we may finally reach the main core of our thesis, proceeding to its last and most important initial problem: the provocative, allegedly anachronistic historical profile of Aristobulus, along with his seemingly ahead-of-time philosophical views and discursive strategies. Concerned with this problem, the final three chapters of this investigation will be dedicated, first, to clarify Aristobulus's social character and his mental framework via the analysis of his testimonies; and secondly, to associate this testified character to its contemporary sources and to its indissociable historical context, the multiethnic society of Ptolemaic Alexandria, within which the philosopher not only had flourished but also found motivation for his work.

As we proceed to the matter of Aristobulus's historical profile, we might benefit from transcending the document itself, i.e. the text, for a moment, and concentrating in its alleged historical circumstances, i.e. the context. More specifically, in order to demonstrate how the former connects to the latter, and since the philological or textual analysis of the source has been largely attempted in the past, so we actually fill up some vacuums in our understanding about the Jewish philosopher, we must hereafter venture into three tasks.

First, the present and next chapters of our discussion, dedicated to Aristobulus's testimonies throughout history, are intended to collect the biographical information about him preserved in later literature, synthesizing them in a well-rounded historical figure for the philosopher and allowing us to raise our first hypothesis, about his social profile.

Secondly, as we proceed to the next chapter, we will concentrate in correlating this figure to its context with the analysis of II Maccabees and some other records contemporary to Aristobulus, such as recently found administrative papyri of Ptolemaic Alexandria<sup>1</sup>, giving full response to our primary findings on the philosopher's historical character and raising the second central hypothesis of this work, about his social context.

Subsequently, in the last chapter, we will be directly analyzing the fragments, notably not isolated, but rather in correlation with their context and parallel evidence, seeking support

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<sup>1</sup> On the papyri of Ptolemaic Egypt, see Santó Zsuzsanna, *The Jews of Ptolemaic Egypt in the Light of the Papyri*, Doctoral Thesis (Budapest: Történelemtudományi Doktori Iskola, 2016).

in this collation of sources for an actual reconstruction of the social conditions which had motivated Aristobulus's philosophical features and to which his character might correspond.

### **3. The problem of the historical character**

At this point, much of the current discussion looks like a bibliographical review since we have done nothing but explaining what scholars have discovered on Aristobulus's fragments and why each of the recensionists preserved them. The introduction above was required not least since it consists in a scarcely known object of research, even among most Jewish historians. From now on, so that we do not limit ourselves to the previous debates, let us focus on direct analyses of our primary sources, recurring to the recent bibliography on them as support rather than subject, until we can finally point out some clear, but independent historical hypotheses to confront with what has been done.

If we intend to clarify Aristobulus's historical profile and seriously exploit the matter of potential anachronisms in them, it is clear that we should not limit ourselves to the text itself, but look to its surrounding, both textually, learning how the recensionists present him and testify to his life and work, and metatextually, seeking information in parallel and contemporary sources, such as II Maccabees. Actually, the source itself, the five Greek fragments recorded in their most complete form by Eusebius, do not provide any information on the historical character Aristobulus; he does not present himself anytime in the preserved writings and all of his argumentations are only elucidative of his context, rather than of him as a person. Therefore, since before reaching Aristobulus's fragments themselves we have to know who the philosopher actually is, following our inductive line of reasoning, let us approach him by the corners, starting with his testimonia.

**3.1. *The testimonies of the recensionists.*** Allow us now to primarily address the accounts of the very preservers of Aristobulus's writings, contrasting their descriptions of the Jewish philosopher in order to sort up all accountable information about his historical character. As explained before, the fragments followed two paths of textual transmission: one namely dependent on the testimony of II Maccabees 1:10, represented by Clement's and Eusebius's recensions, and another which has likely started with Anatolius's quotation of Fragment 1. Likewise, two respective traditions of interpretation about Aristobulus's *persona* rise in Christian literature, differing with respect to the philosopher's date, context and social role, as it will become clearer ahead.

3.1.1. *Clement*. As explained before, the first to mention Aristobulus after the unknown author(s) of II Maccabees 1:10, the only testimony contemporary to him, is Clement of Alexandria. The Christian father describes the Jewish philosopher in three passages throughout the volumes of his *Stromata*. Those passages read as follows:

τούτων ἀπάντων πρεσβύτατον μακρῶ τὸ Ἰουδαίων γένος, καὶ τὴν παρ' αὐτοῖς φιλοσοφίαν ἐγγραπτον γενομένην προκκατάρξει τῆς παρ' Ἑλληνισι φιλοσοφίας διὰ πολλῶν ὁ Πυθαγόρειος ὑποδείκνυσι Φίλων, οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ καὶ Ἀριστόβουλος ὁ Περιπατικὸς καὶ ἄλλοι πλείους, ἵνα μὴ κατ' ὄνομα ἐπιῶν διατρίβω.<sup>2</sup>

Of all these, by far the oldest is the Jewish race; and that their philosophy committed to writing has the precedence of philosophy among the Greeks, the Pythagorean Philo shows at large; and, besides him, Aristobulus the Peripatetic, and several others, not to waste time in going over them by name.<sup>3</sup>

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Ἀριστόβουλος δὲ ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ τῶν πρὸς τὸν Φιλομήτορα κατὰ λέξιν γράφει<sup>4</sup>

And Aristobulus, in his first book addressed to Philometor, writes in these words:...

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Ἀριστοβούλω δὲ τῷ κατὰ Πτολεμαῖον γεγονῶτι τὸν φιλάδελφον, οὗ μέμνηται ὁ συνταξάμενος τὴν τῶν Μακκαβαϊκῶν ἐπιτομήν, βιβλία γέγονεν ἱκανά, δι' ὧν ἀποδείκνυσι τὴν Περιπατητικὴν φιλοσοφίαν ἐκ τε τοῦ κατὰ Μωυσῆα νόμου καὶ τοῦ ἄλλων ἠρτῆσθαι προφητῶν.<sup>5</sup>

And by Aristobulus, who lived in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus, who is mentioned by the composer of the epitome of the books of the Maccabees, there were abundant books to show that the Peripatetic philosophy was derived from the law of Moses and from the other prophets.<sup>6</sup>

The first passage is very elucidative of Aristobulus's philosophical enterprise, since it points out the claim that the Jews' philosophy "has precedence" over that of the Greeks, although his argumentation goes much beyond that. Clement appears to be aware of other authors which defend the same as Aristobulus and Philo, also identifying their ideas. Maybe because of his own Greek educational background, which has been pointed out before, Clement is the first source to regard Aristobulus as a Peripatetic, as one can also observe in the third excerpt, and this testimony about his school of thought is later followed by Eusebius.

Moreover, in the second excerpt, as Holladay notes, "it is Clement who first identifies him [Aristobulus] with the figure mentioned in *II Maccabees* 1:10"<sup>7</sup>. In contrast, the Christian seems oddly unaware or simply neglects Aristobulus's priestly descent and his social status as

2 Clement, *Strom.* 1.15.72.4 (Holladay [FrHJA 3], T2, p. 114=O. Stählin [GCS 15(52)], vol. 2, p. 46.15-19=Jacoby [FgrH 737.9], vol. 3c2, p. 704).

3 William Wilson [ANCL 4], *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria*, vol. 1. p. 399 apud Holladay [FrHJA 3], T2, p. 114.

4 Clement, *Strom.* 1.22.150.1 (Holladay [FrHJA 3], T3, p. 115=Stählin [GCS 15(52)], vol. 2, pp. 92.27-93.1)=Eusebius *P.E.* 9.6.6 (Mras [GCS 43(1)], p. 493.9-10).

5 Clement, *Strom.* 5.14.97.7 (Holladay [FrHJA 3], T4, p. 115=Stählin [GCS 15(52)], vol. 2, p. 390.14-18=Jacoby [FgrH 737.9], vol. 3c2, p. 704).

6 Wilson [ANCL 12], *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria*, vol. 2. p. 279 apud Holladay [FrHJA 3], T4, p. 115.

Ptolemy's teacher or representant of the Jewish community in Alexandria<sup>8</sup>. Holladay also explains that, in the same passage, Clement already “makes explicit the connection [...] that Aristobulus was a contemporary of Ptolemy VI Philometor”<sup>9</sup>, as would suggest the crossing of evidence with II Maccabees.

There are, however, some issues to be underlined when it comes to Clementine assumptions on the time and political context in which the Jewish philosopher would have flourished. In the second passage, as he introduces Fragment 3, Clement indeed states explicitly, as also suggests the testimony of II Maccabees 1:10, that Aristobulus's writings were addressed to the king surnamed Philometor (πρὸς τῶν Φιλομήτορα).

However, note that, apart from direct quotations of the philosopher, in the third passage, Clement contrastingly reads as Ἀριστοβούλω δὲ τῷ κατὰ Πτολεμαῖον γεγονότι τὸν Φιλάδελφον<sup>10</sup>, that is, “Aristobulus, who lived in the time of Ptolemy *called by* [or literally *who had taken place as*] Philadelphus”. Even odder yet, in Clement's previous quotes of Aristobulus (Frg. 3b = *Strom.* 1.22.148.1<sup>11</sup>), the Jewish gives an imprecise account on the time of production of the LXX, associating it to either the time of king Ptolemy II Philadelphus or that of Ptolemy, son of Lagus. The doubt was apparently excluded in Eusebius's recension (Frg. 3(2) = *P.E.* 13.12.2<sup>12</sup>).

Clement's apparent confusion whether to place the philosopher under the reign of Philometor, during the mid-second century BCE, or under that of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, over a hundred years before, becomes a persistent matter of debates. To such a controversy a clever solution is notably provided by Zeller<sup>13</sup>, who proposes the possible use of the epithet Philadelphus as a dynastic title, which could actually have been used by either Clement or Aristobulus himself to refer Philometor instead of his ancestor. Anyhow, it is very clear, from

7 Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 43-44. As we have introduced, Aristobulus is addressed in *II Maccabees* 1:10, the salutation of a letter destined to the Jews in Egypt, which greets the philosopher as king Ptolemy's Jewish “teacher” or “instructor” (διδασκάλῳ Πτολεμαίου τοῦ βασιλέως), as coming from a “blessed priestly family” (χριστῶν γένους) and a part of the community of “Jews in Egypt” (Αἰγύπτῳ Ἰουδαίοις); cf. Holladay [FrHJA 3], T1, p. 114=Hanhart [Göttingen LXX 9(2)], p. 48=Rahlf's [LXX], p. 1765.

8 The aspects of Aristobulus registered in II Macc 1:10 and not mentioned by Clement and Eusebius will be carefully examined in the fifth chapter of this discussion, dedicated exclusively to the historical analysis of the biblical passage.

9 Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 46.

10 Clement, *Strom.* 5.14.97.7 (Holladay [FrHJA 3], T4, p. 115=Stählin [GCS 15(52)], 2.390.14-18=Jacoby [FgrH 737.10], vol. 3c2, p. 704).

11 Holladay [FrHJA 3], Frg. 3b, p. 46.

12 Holladay [FrHJA 3], Frg. 3(2), p. 46.

13 E. Zeller, “Die nacharistotelische Philosophie”, in *Die Philosophie der Griechen in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* [1921-23], vol 3 (6th ed.; Hildesheim: Olms, 1963), ch. 2, p. 281.2. On the use of the term, cf. Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 72; and notes in p. 90.



the first chapter of this discussion, that those contradictions in Clement's text, as well as the incoherence between some of his claims and those of Eusebius, considered to be the most reliable recension, remain for a long time objects of great concern when it comes to the matter of the fragments' authenticity.

Nevermind that, the Christian's testimony, as stated before, provides crucial information on Aristobulus's endeavourment: "the fragments quoted by Clement characterize Aristobulus's work as allegorical interpretation"<sup>14</sup>, as argues Holladay. Likely having had direct access to the original work, he was also aware of its full extent: the third except above shows explicitly that there were βιβλία γέγονεν ἰκανά authored by Aristobulus which, according to Holladay, translates as "abundant books"<sup>15</sup>. And that can also be inferred from the second passage as well, once the Christian refers to Aristobulus's "first book" (τῷ πρώτῳ), suggesting that there were others available to him. In sum, according to Clement's testimony, as one can clearly read in the passages above, Aristobulus's writings, at least the ones he quoted, were addressed to king Ptolemy and sought to demonstrate both the relative antiquity of the Jews and the derivation of Greek philosophy from the Bible.

*3.1.2. Anatolius.* As we have briefed above, the fact Anatolius likely had access to Aristobulus's work from sources other than Clement and that he is not, at least not explicitly, dependent on II Macc 1:10, even contradicting the biblical testimony, reflects crucially on his interpretation of the philosopher's figure. As Holladay explains,

compared with the relative uniformity of the II Maccabees–Clement–Eusebius tradition, the testimony of Anatolius represents a somewhat divergent tradition and illustrates the kind of confusion that existed in antiquity regarding the date and reputation of Aristobulus.<sup>16</sup>

His testimony, thus connects the Jewish allegorist to a whole different context, assigning to him not only a date nearly a hundred years before the one testified by Clement and Eusebius based on II Maccabees, but also a very distinct role in the Alexandrian society. Accordingly, the part of the Jewish's work preserved by Anatolius, only Fragment 1, presents a discussion of very distinguished philosophical features as well: it consists in an astrological defense of a particular date for the feast of Passover to be celebrated. In the middle of his

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<sup>14</sup> Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 46.

<sup>15</sup> Holladay's translation of ἰκανά ("abundant") follows the use of the prefix ἰκαν- attested in Mt. 28:12 and Mk. 10:46. It should be remarked that the term may also be translated as "competent", "qualified" or "satisfying", as in 2 Cor. 2:16, Lk. 22:38 and Mt. 3:11. We cannot, thus, assure anything about the quantity or extension of the volumes authored by Aristobulus, anyhow, it is clear the implication of probably long-perished yet regularly publicized editions of the original work.

<sup>16</sup> Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 47.

argumentation, as a validation resource, Anatolius refers to this position on the date of Passover as something long conceived by the Jews, citing Aristobulus as one of the oldest among them. He describes the philosopher as reads below:

[...] μαθρεῖν δ' ἔστιν ἐκ τῶν ὑπὸ Φίλωνος Ἰωσήπου Μουσαίου λεγομένων, καὶ οὐ μόνων τούτων, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶν ἔτι παλαιότερων ἀμφοτέρων Ἀγαθοβούλων, τον ἐπὶ κλην διδασκάλων Ἀριστοβούλου τοῦ πάνυ, ὃς ἐν τοῖς ὁ κατελειμένος τοῖς τὰς ἱερὰς καὶ θείας Ἑβραίων ἐρμηνεύσασι γραφὰς Πτολεμαίῳ τῷ Φιλαδέλφῳ καὶ τῷ τούτου πατρὶ, καὶ βίβλους ἐξηγητικὰς τοῦ Μωυσέως νόμου τοῖς αὐτοῖς προσεφώνησεν βασιλεῦσιν.<sup>17</sup>

[...] This is known not only from what was said by Philo, Josephus, and Musaeus, but also by those even older, namely, the two Agathobuli, who are called "the teachers" along with the renowned Aristobulus. The latter was numbered among the seventy who translated the sacred and divine scriptures of the Hebrews for Ptolemy Philadelphus and his father; and he dedicated his commentaries on the law of Moses to the same kings.

As one can see above, distinctively from Clement, and Eusebius after him, Anatolius understands Aristobulus as one of the seventy Jewish sages responsible for the translation of the LXX who, according to the myth-historical account of the *Letter of Aristeas*, were recruited by king Ptolemy I Soter<sup>18</sup>. Anatolius, thus, places the Jew between the time of Ptolemy Soter and that of his son and successor, Ptolemy II Philadelphus<sup>19</sup>, as the bishop explicitly states above. Anatolius also does not conceive the Jewish philosopher as a Peripatetic like the other recensionists, not surprisingly in face of his use of different philosophical methods in that specific fragment.

Nevertheless, in coherence with Clement, he does attribute the authorship of “exegetical commentaries” (ἐξηγητικὰς<sup>20</sup>) on the Law of Moses to him, regarding Aristobulus more clearly as a renowned intellectual, “even older” (ἔτι παλαιότερων<sup>21</sup>) than Philo and Josephus. This suggests that, even though it is true that the Aristobulus of Fragment 1 has a distinct rethoric and is concerned with matters completely indifferent to the signature project of cultural synthesis, he is not at all incompatible with the Jewish philosopher testified by Clement after the account of *Maccabees*.

17 Anatolius, *Περὶ τοῦ πάσχα* apud Eusebius *H.E.* 7.32.16 (Schwartz [GCS 9(2)], pp.722.28=Holladay [FrHJA 3], T7(6), p. 117).

18 The *Letter* states specifically that the seventy were "brought over by Ptolemy the son of Lagus", which is identified as Ptolemy I Soter; cf. R. J. H. Schutt, "Letter of Aristeas" in J. H. Charlesworth [ed.], *The Old Testament Pseudepigraphy*, vol. II [OTP 2] (New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1985), p. 13.

19 Anatolius unequivocally states: [Ἀριστοβούλου,] ὃς ἐν τοῖς ὁ κατελεγμένος τοῖς τὰς ἱερὰς καὶ θείας Ἑβραίων ἐρμηνεύσασι γραφὰς Πτολεμαίῳ τῷ Φιλαδέλφῳ καὶ τῷ τούτου πατρὶ (Anatolius, *Περὶ τοῦ πάσχα*, apud Eusebius, *H.E.* 7.32.16 in Stählin [GCS 9], p. 724), that is, “[Aristobulus,] who was among the seventy who translated the sacred and divine scriptures of the Hebrews for Ptolemy Philadelphus and his father” (Holladay [FrHJA 3], T7(6), p. 117).

20 Idem.

21 Idem.

On that purpose, when it comes to II Maccabees 1:10, Anatolius not only does not directly associate Aristobulus to the figure testified in the biblical passage it, but also does he not mention it by any means, which convincingly suggests that he was simply not aware of it. However, indicating the opposite, or maybe actually demonstrating the facticity of Aristobulus's existence, Anatolius regards the Jewish as a "teacher"<sup>22</sup>, as accounted by II Macc 1:10. As we have seen, that is an aspect of Aristobulus's character which even Clement, although explicitly dependent on the apocryphon, paradoxically fails to recognize – and subsequently, Eusebius does the same. After all, because Frg. 1 appears as a part of Anatolius's Paschal Canonns, it seems largely that, although Anatolius was aware of the other works of Aristobulus and maybe also of other testimonies, he just did not care as much for the historical features of the philosopher as for the objective physical discussion entertained.

Anyhow, because Anatolius's heterodox interpretation of Aristobulus, along with its dating and the supposition that the philosopher was one of the seventy sages who wrote the Septuagint, at all lacks support in the sources<sup>23</sup>, it is deemed incorrect – likely an error derived from a confusion over the Ptolemies. Last case, much more than only a point out of the curve traced by the orthodox descriptions, Anatolius's testimony can actually be seen as evidence for Aristobulus's existence: since "in spite of the conflicting elements, certain features correspond to the II Maccabees–Clement–Eusebius tradition"<sup>24</sup>, it most certainly represents a fully independent tradition, derived from other sources or the original work. Additionally, it also takes place little time after Clement, which indicates that, if not widely circulated in Alexandria at this point, Aristobulus's work was well-known by Christian apologetes.

*3.1.3. Eusebius.* As explained above, Clement's interpretation of Aristobulus's figure, although explicitly aware of II Maccabees places the philosopher simply as one between many Peripatetic philosophers in Ptolemaic Alexandria, who also happened to be a Jewish. The Christian makes no effort to comment on the larger context of Ptolemaic Egypt,

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22 As one can see in the excerpt of Frg. 1 above, the term διδασκάλων is used to refer Aristobulus among with two other men, both called Agathobulus (Anatolius, Περὶ τοῦ πάσχα, apud Eusebius, *H.E.* 7.32.18, in Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 130-1). It is notable here that present scholars are not aware of two Agathobuli, but only of one: Agathobulus of Alexandria, a cynic philosopher contemporary of Adrian and Plutarch (early second-century CE), who flourished actually a few decades *later* than Philo and Josephus.

23 All other sources point out for the time of Philometor (mid-second century BCE) as the correct date of Aristobulus's work, as it has been largely discussed. About the possibility of the philosopher being one of the seventy sages responsible for the LXX, it is remarkable that the *Letter of Aristeas* cites each of the seventy, actually seventy-two sages by name and original tribe, and Aristobulus does not appear among them; cf. R. J. H. Schutt, *op. cit.*, p.16.

24 Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 48.

automatically associated to Aristobulus in the biblical passage, or to explain his social engagement in it. Clement's testimony fails to mention any political or administrative position which, as one can infer, Aristobulus would need to have to be addressed as a major authority, representative of the Jewish community of Alexandria, as he is in II Macc 1:10. Eusebius, as we will see, follows Clement and provides the same partial view on Aristobulus.

It is exactly because much of the features of Eusebius's knowledge about Aristobulus seem to derive directly from Clement, like his assumptions over the mention in II Maccabees 1:10, that we can think of them, as stated before, as a single tradition along with the biblical passage, as opposed to Anatolius's line of interpretation. Nevertheless, as also argued before, he appears to quote most of the fragments from Aristobulus's own work, adhering more closely to the original text<sup>25</sup>. In support of that assumption, Eusebius preserves material from Aristobulus not found in Clement and provides some additional information on the philosopher, suggesting that, although clearly dependent on the latter in many aspects, he probably did have direct access to the source<sup>26</sup>.

Far more complete than Clement's, the Eusebian testimony on Aristobulus is the most elucidative one, joining together all the scattered information about the Jew in the former's recension into clear sentences and connecting the passages to the idea of a fully realized book addressed to Ptolemy. This becomes very evident in the following passages:

[...] μνημονεύει τε τοῦ πρὸς Ἑλληνας Τατιανοῦ λόγου καὶ Ἀριστοβούλου Ἰωσήπου τε καὶ Δημητρίου καὶ Εὐπολέμου, Ἰουδαίων συγγραφέων, ὡς ἂν τούτων ἀπάντων ἐγγράφως πρεσβύτερον τῆς παρ' Ἑλλήσιν ἀρχαιογονίας Μωυσῆα τε καὶ τὸ Ἰουδαίων γένος ἀποδειξάντων.<sup>27</sup>

[...] and he (Clement) mentions Tatian's book *Against the Greeks*, and Cassian, since he also has composed a chronography, and moreover Philo and Aristobulus and Josephus and Demetrius and Eupolemus, Jewish writers, in that they would show, all of them, in writing, that Moses and the Jewish race went back further in their origins than the Greeks.<sup>28</sup>

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Ἀριστόβουλος δὲ ἄλλος Ἑβραίων σοφὸς ἀνὴρ, κατὰ τὴν τῶν Πτολεμαίων ἀκμάσας ἡγεμονίαν, κυροῖ τὸ δόγμα ὡς πάτριον, αὐτῷ Πτολεμαίῳ τὴν τῶν ἱερῶν νόμων προσφωνῶν ἐρμηναίαν, ἐν ἣ τάδε φησί: ...<sup>29</sup>

25 Ibid., 45.

26 Since there is no evidence of another recension, the hypothesis of Eusebius having had access to the original source is more likely to Holladay, notwithstanding, the absence of documentation must be regarded as actually inconclusive, rather than a firm indication of either thesis; cf. Ibid., p. 47.

27 Eusebius, *H.E.* 6.13.7 (Holladay [FrHJA 3], T9(8), p. 121=Schwartz [GCS 9(2)], 548.10-15).

28 Lawlor & Oulton, *Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea: the Ecclesiastical History and the Martyrs of Palestine*, vol. 1 (London: SPCK, 1954), p. 188.

29 Eusebius *P.E.* 7.13.7 (Holladay [FrHJA 3], T10(9), p. 122=Holladay [FrHJA 3], Frg. 5e, p. 197= Mras [GCS 43(1)] 390.9-12).

Aristobulus, another wise man of the Hebrews, who flourished during the reign of the Ptolemies, confirms the doctrine (of the Logos) as ancestral, speaking to Ptolemy himself concerning the interpretation of our holy laws; ...<sup>30</sup>

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ὁ δὲ Ἀριστόβουλος καὶ τῆς κατ' Ἀριστοτέλην φιλοσοφίας πρὸς τῆ πατρίῳ μετεπιλήξως, ὅποια περὶ τῶν ἐν ταῖς ἱεραῖς βίβλοις φερομένων ὡς περὶ θεοῦ μελῶν διήλθεν ἐπακοῦσαι καιρός· οὗτος δ' (αὐτὸς ἐκεῖνος, οὗ καὶ ἡ δευτέρα τῶν μακκαβαίων ἐν ἀρχῇ τῆς βίβλου μνημονεύει) ...<sup>31</sup>

Now it is time to listen to Aristobulus, the very one who had participated in the study of Aristotelian philosophy in addition to that of his own people – to what sorts of things he recounted concerning the references in the sacred books relating to God's limbs. (He is the one mentioned at the beginning of the Second Book of Maccabees.) ...<sup>32</sup>

The first passage is found in the middle of Eusebius's explanation of the features in each of Clement's works, where he states that the latter "elucidates the opinions of many"<sup>33</sup>, and goes on to some examples. In that context, Aristobulus is cited, once again among Philo, Josephus and other prominent judeohellenistic authors, as the ones to demonstrate in their writings the anteriority of Jews over Greeks, as stated before, one of the main philosophical arguments defended by him. Circumscribing thus an intellectual tradition represented by those authors, Eusebius seeks to associate them as predecessors of Christianity<sup>34</sup>, as we have discussed, reason why he identifies Aristobulus explicitly as a "Hebrew" (Ἑβραίων βίους<sup>35</sup>), as one can see in the subsequent excerpt.

The second account, for its turn, is presented in Eusebius's foreword to Frg. 5e, the part of Aristobulus's work dedicated to Ptolemy where the philosopher describes his view of the Greek Λόγος, which he understands as the divine sevenfold principle of all human knowledge. Aristobulus's interpretation of the Logos will be more carefully approached under the light of the whole fragment<sup>36</sup>; for now, suffice it to say that it is also a main feature of his philosophical enterprise, pivotal in stablishing the link that the philosopher seeks to demonstrate between Plato's philosophy and the Jewish beliefs.

Finally, the third passage appears in the introduction to Frg. 2 in Eusebius's recension and it presents Aristobulus subsequent discussion: a thoughtful treatise on God's potential anthropomorphisms found in the Scriptures, likely pointed out by Greeks as means to defy the Jewish beliefs. The fragment will be individually approached further; for now suffice it to say

30 Holladay [FrHJA 3], T10(9), p. 122=Holladay [FrHJA 3], Frg. 5e, p. 197.

31 Eusebius *P.E.* 8.9.38-10.1 (Holladay [FrHJA 3], T11(10), p. 123=Holladay [FrHJA 3], Frg. 2, p. 134= Mras [GCS 43(1)] 451.5-12).

32 Holladay [FrHJA 3], Frg. 2, p. 135.

33 Holladay [FrHJA 3], T11(10), p. 123=Holladay [FrHJA 3], Frg. 2, p. 134.

34 On the Eusebian use of "hebrew" to refer to Jewish hellenistic authors, see S. Inowlocki, *Eusebius and the Jewish Authors: His Citation Technique in an Apologetic Context* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006), pp. 237-241.

35 *P.E.* 7.7.1-3 (Mras [GCS 43.1], p. 369.14-17).

36 Cf. §6.1.5 below.

that it consists in a detained allegorical exegesis of "the references in the sacred books relating to God's limbs" (θεοῦ μελῶν διήλθεν ἐπακοῦσαι καιρός· οὗτος δ'<sup>37</sup>), in which Aristobulus argues for a metaphorical interpretation of the biblical mentions to God's body parts, as opposed to the typically literal reading of the Greek myths.

Moreover, Eusebius states that the Jew had participated in the study of Aristotelian philosophy (Ἀριστοτέλην φιλοσοφίας) in association with that of his people, and links him namely with the figure mentioned in II Macc 1:10. Thus, he only mitigatedly follows Clement's testimony in the assumption the Jewish philosopher was a Peripatetic, if we consider his evasive choice of words on that matter, but confidently agrees with it in that he was also the authority who the epistle in II Maccabees is addressed to.

Also like Clement, even though identifying the recipient of II Macc with Aristobulus, Eusebius either does not mention most of the central aspects associated to the Jew in the biblical passage<sup>38</sup>: except for stating that his works were addressed to Ptolemy, the Christians do not elaborate on the philosopher's position as the king's teacher or his political reputation in Ptolemaic Egypt. The most interesting feature of Clement's and Eusebius's testimonies, though, is that, regardless of not providing further information on Aristobulus's social role in Alexandria and his fame among the Jews, concentrating strictly in his philosophical aspects, they encompass both facets of the philosopher's historical *persona* in a single individual, maintaining both possibilities not only open but coherent with each other.

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In sum, joining together the historical information provided by the recensionists, we are again left with the same relatively uniform image that modern scholars came to realize for Aristobulus: "a prominent Jewish figure who flourished in Ptolemaic Egypt and wrote exegetical works on the Pentateuch that employed allegorical methods of interpretation and treated philosophical topics"<sup>39</sup>, as Holladay resumes. About the extent and organisation of Aristobulus's works, we get from Clement and Eusebius that most of them (Frags. 2-5) were

37 Eusebius *P.E.* 8.9.38-10.1 (Holladay [FrHJA 3], T11(10), p. 123=Holladay [FrHJA 3], Frg. 2, p. 134-5=Mras [GCS 43(1)] 451.5-12).

38 As Clement did before, Eusebius seems to neglect the fact that, according to II Maccabees, Aristobulus would have been from a "family of priests" (χριστῶν γένους) and also makes no mention to any social role of political authority assigned to the philosopher in Alexandria that would justify him being addressed as a representant of the "Egyptian Jews" (Αἰγύπτῳ Ἰουδαίοις); cf. Holladay [FrHJA 3], T1, p. 114=Hanhart [Göttingen LXX 9(2)], p. 48=Rahlf's [LXX], p. 1765.

39 Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 49.

parts of a thick multi-volume treatise addressed to Ptolemy, referred by the former as the philosopher's "first book" (πρώτῳ), as opposed to the independent Frg. 1.

As to Aristobulus's philosophical defense in the writings, on the one hand, the book to Ptolemy, as Clement registers, consists in a large attempt to show the precedence of Jewish beliefs on Greek philosophy, and the dependence of the latter on the former, going through polemics on anthropomorphism, the meaning of Λόγος (*Logos*) and comparative analyses of the Law. On the other hand, the excerpt preserved by Anatolius (Frg. 1), although much of his testimony is to be deemed historically inconsistent, shows us that the Jewish philosopher also ventured in naturalist discussions and astrological knowledge, engaging thoroughly in the principles of the Greek φύσις (*physis*). Clement and Eusebius regard Aristobulus as a Peripatetic, mainly concerned with Aristotelian philosophy but, as we have seen, Walter has modernly identified his methods as closer to those of the *Stoa*, pointing him out as a Stoic in a wider sense, or rather, as an eclectic<sup>40</sup>.

About the historical character of the author, all three recensionists mention Aristobulus besides other Hellenistic Jews, such as Philo and Josephus, locating him as an older *philosophical* authority among them, of great prestige in under the Ptolemies. Both Clement and Eusebius associate him expressly with Ptolemy VI Philometor, in agreement with modern scholars, which depict the philosopher as a renowned Alexandrian philosopher who lived in the first half of the second century BCE. Anatolius, although he wrongly assigns the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus to Aristobulus, numbers the Jew among teachers, one of his aspects underlined in II Maccabees 1:10

The testimonies of the Christian compilers, however, leave us also faced with a gap: all of them seem compatible with II Maccabees, but none provide information that can actually justify Aristobulus being addressed in the biblical passage. None of them can explain why the Jew is spoke to on behalf of the Jews in Egypt and referred as the actual king Ptolemy's teacher, two aspects in II Maccabees that would imply his figure to be erected to a position of major *political* authority in Alexandria.

Therefore, if we establish right now our central hypothesis about Aristobulus's historical character, we would have to split it in two: on the one hand, Aristobulus, the Jewish philosopher who wrote allegorical commentaries on the Bible under the light of Greek philosophy, addressed to king Philometor; and on the other, Aristobulus, the Jewish political

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40 Walter, *Der Thorausleger Aristobulos* apud Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 59.

authority, likely a courtier of that king, who was himself addressed in II Maccabees as a major representant of the Jewish community in Egypt.

The first Aristobulus, as we have seen, can be fairly confirmed in the sources, since Clement, Anatolius and Eusebius represent at least three independent and direct witnesses to his work, and the tradition remains consistent with time<sup>41</sup>. The second is actually Walter's hypothesis: that Aristobulus had actually been a participant of Philometor's close circles at some point, acquiring distinctive status and a social role of prestige among the intellectuality of the Egyptian city<sup>42</sup>; and it remains here unproven and unexploited. Let us now, therefore, search for confirmation or denial to this hypothesis in some testimonies other than those of the recensionists, seeking evidence to comprehend Aristobulus's social profile in terms of his political and administrative engagements, in addition to his philosophical features.

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41 See Chart 1 in the next page.

42 Walter, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-49.

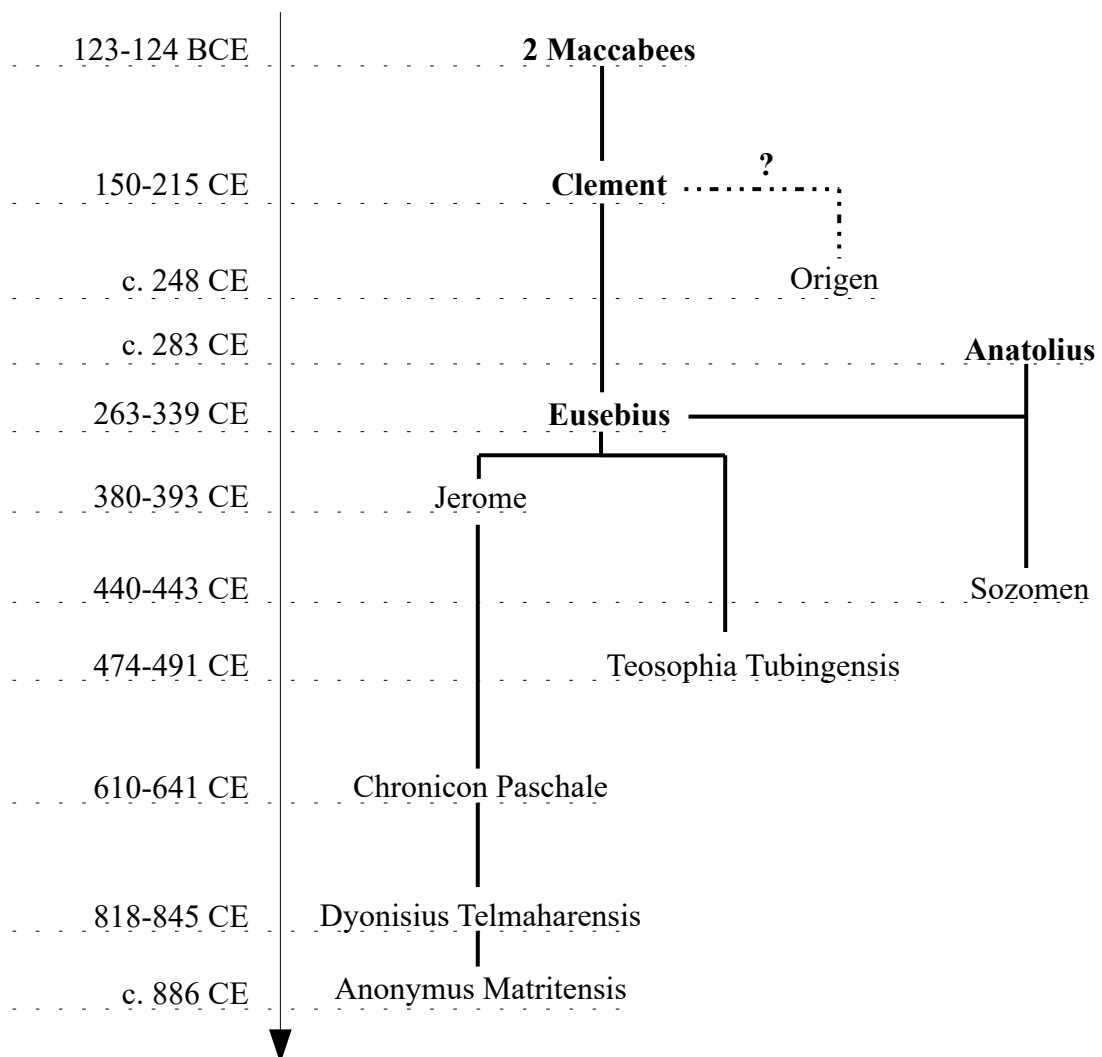


## CHAPTER IV

### OTHER WITNESSES AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

#### 4. Aristobulus's testimony throughout history

Even though the oldest testimonies on Aristobulus after II Maccabees, the accounts of the recensionists are not the only descriptions of the Jewish philosopher available in literature. However, as Holladay noted, and Walter before him, "other witnesses to the Aristobulus tradition appear to derive from these two traditions"<sup>1</sup>. More explicitly, the report of Aristobulus's life and work passes ahead, from as early as Clement until as late as ninth-century medieval chronicles, as below:



<sup>1</sup> Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 48.

As one can conclude from the chart above, which we are going to recall as our testimoniality tree, the news about a Jewish philosopher from Alexandria, called Aristobulus, spread fairly widely throughout history in Christian literature, echoing through late secondary sources. One should not naturalize such layers of interpretation, since the very comprehension of the philosopher's character has its own historicity, and later glosses in this sense might very well affect, or add up to modern analyses.

**4.1. Other witnesses.** We will now use a retrospective approach to address each witness of Aristobulus's existence in Christian literature, finally culminating with the contemporary testimony in II Maccabees, along with some other coeval sources, which will be extensively treated in the next chapter. As shown in the timeline, all of the sources that testify to Aristobulus, in exemption of the furthestmost II Maccabees 1:10 and possibly Origen<sup>2</sup>, Clement's contemporary, are dependent on the three preservers of his work: the latter, Eusebius and Anatolius – whose accounts and interests were extensively treated above.

Far from useless to our discussion though, even the latest testimonies aside, far away from the first commentators, can help clarify what, for a reason or another, has been considered important to recall from Aristobulus's character among people from times still earlier than ours, some of who maybe even had access to his work through larger extents than the ones now available to us.

**4.1.1. Eusebius-Jerome Chronicon.** The latest records of Aristobulus found in literature are medieval recensions of a descriptive passage dedicated to the Jewish philosopher, firstly presented in Eusebius's *Chronicon*<sup>3</sup>. The passage was an entry of the *Chronici canones*, as in Jerome's Latin translation, or the Παντοδαπή ιστορία, as in the original title, Greek for "Universal history", which was the second tome of a

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2 "Origen (c. 215) was a philosopher and biblical scholar who wrote more than 6,000 commentaries on Old and New Testament books as well as homilies that are the oldest known Christian preaching. He is known as the father of theology" (John H. Barnhill, "Coptic Christian Church" in Eric Orlin [ed.], *Routledge Encyclopedia of Ancient Mediterranean Religions* [New York: Taylor & Francis, 2016], pp. 183-4). Cf. also B. F. Westcott, "Origenes", in Henry Wace [ed.], *A Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature to the End of the Sixth Century A.D.* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000), pp. 1247-85.

3 J. K. Fotheringham, *Eusebii Pamphili Chronici canones* (London: Humphrey Milford, 1923). For apparatus criticus, cf. Alden A. Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and the Greek Chronographic Tradition* (Lewisburg/London: Bucknell University Press, 1979); and Richard W. Burgess, *Studies in Eusebian and post-Eusebian Chronography* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1999).

two-volume universal chronicle of the world [...], reconciling Greek, Roman, Persian, Jewish and Christian history within a system of chronological tables, [...] in such a way that Abraham (the 'first Christian') served as beginning and Constantine (the first Christian emperor) as the end [...]. The Greek original of Eusebius's *Chronicle* has been lost, but Jerome's Latin translation of the second book [...] is well preserved.<sup>4</sup>

In those chronological tables, each major historical event or character of those civilizations are presented side by side with a specific and unified date. "Around 380", Jerome translated Eusebius's world chronography, "adding to its contents and carrying it forward to his own day"<sup>5</sup>. Although Jerome, along with the three subsequent recensions of the passage, represents a very long and particularly late branch of transmission in Aristobulus's testimoniality tree, they all trace back to Eusebius.

The chart of the *Chronicon* which contains the account of Aristobulus associates him with the *anno Abrahami* of 1841, that is, the year of 176 B. C. E. in the Eusebian dating system<sup>6</sup>. In its earliest and most complete version, the passage reads as:

Aristobulus natione Iudaeus peripateticus philosophus agnoscitur. Qui ad Philometorem Ptolemaeum explanationum in Moysen commentarios scripsit.<sup>7</sup>

Aristobulus, a Peripatetic philosopher of the Jewish nation, became known. He wrote commentaries addressed to Ptolemy Philometor explaining the law of Moses.

The last recension<sup>8</sup> of this passage appears in an "augmented, emended and extended version of the second edition of the *Chronographicon syntomon* (χρονογραφικὸν σύντομον) of Nikephoros Patriarches (of 848)"<sup>9</sup>. Written in Greek language circa 886, under Byzantine domain, likely in Constantinople, the "anonymous chronicle [...]" is transmitted in a Madrid codex of the 10<sup>th</sup> century (Matritensis gr. 4701)"<sup>10</sup>, which is why it became known under the pseudonymous authorship of *Anonymus Matritensis*.

Earlier in the ninth century, another quotation of the passage, a lot more concise, is found in "the Syriac Chronicle of Dyonisius Telmaharensis, which is based on Eusebius as far

4 Jennifer Knust, "Chronicle of Eusebius" in Eric Orlin [ed.], *Routledge Encyclopedia of Ancient Mediterranean Religions* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2016), pp. 183-4.

5 Francis T. Harkins, "Jerome" in M. E. Ackermann, M. J. Schroeder, J. J. Terry, J. H. Lo Upshur & M. F. Whitters, *Encyclopedia of World History, vol. I: The Ancient World (Prehistoric Eras to 600 C. E.)* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2008), p. 219.

6 "Eusebius used an era which began with the birth of Abraham in 2016 BC (1 AD = 2017 Anno Abrahami)" (Catalin Negru, *History of the Apocalypse* [Raleigh: Lulu Press, 2018], p. 71).

7 Rudolf Helm [ed.], *Eusebius Werke, Band 7: Die Chronik des Hieronymus* [GCS 47] (Leipzig: Hinrichssche Buchhandlung, 1913), p. 139.2-6.

8 Adolf Bauer, *Anonymi Chronographia syntomos e codice Matritensi no. 121 (nunc 4701)* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1909), p. 41.10-13.

9 Richard W. Burgess, "Anonymus Matritensis" in G. Dunphy & C. Bratu [eds.], *Encyclopedia of the Medieval Chronicle*. Consulted online on 03 October 2019 <[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2213-2139\\_emc\\_SIM\\_00207](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2213-2139_emc_SIM_00207)>. First published online: 2016.

10 William Adler, "Introduction" in Martin Wallraff [ed.], *Iulius Africanus Chronographiae* [GCS NF 15] (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2007), p. L.

as the age of Constantine"<sup>11</sup>. The briefest recension of the *Chronicon*'s excerpt about Aristobulus, it records simply: *Aristobulus Iudaeus philosophus tunc floruit*<sup>12</sup> ("Aristobulus, a Jewish philosopher, then flourished"), a shortened version of Jerome's Latin translation, referring to the same Abrahamic year of 1841.

Finally, roughly two hundred and fifty years before *Anonymus Matritensis* and after Jerome, we have a Greek quote of the passage in the *Chronicon Paschale*, "Easter Chronicle", another Byzantine anonymous chronicle. Dating of the early seventh century, "the text breaks off in 628 C. E. with documents from the reign of Emperor Heraclius (r. 610-641 C. E.), but the last folio was lost, making it difficult to date [...] with certainty"<sup>13</sup>.

The recensions of the passage in the *Chronicon Paschale* and in the *Anonymus Matritensis* are very similar greek excerpts whose production took place in Constantiple, thus it is likely that they are directly connected in terms of textual transmission. Likely retranlations from Jerome, both chronicles' passages are also very much alike the original one, with the distinctive exemption of attributting a determined title to Aristobulus's work: ἐξηγήσεις τῆς Μωϋσέως γραφῆς<sup>14</sup>, "Explanations of Moses' Scriptures" – likely a trivial assumption of the later authors on Eusebius's text, rather than a true statement.

4.1.2. *Theosophia Tubingensis*. Another branch in the Eusebian testimoniality transmission, which does not actually deserve much of our attention, is represented by *Theosophia Tubingensis*, an eleven-volume compilation of "monotheistic oracles". The theology compilation, "which was composed between 474 and 491", was intended to show that "the so-called theologies of the Greek of Egyptian sages [...] agree with the objective of the divine scriptures"<sup>15</sup>.

The *Theosophia* presents an altered version of Eusebius's foreword to Aristobulus's fragment 3 (*P. E.* 13.12.1a), followed by an identical copy of the subsequent quotation of the

11 William H. P. Hatch, "The Apostles in the New Testament and in the Ecclesiastical Tradition of Egypt" in *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 21, No. 2 (April, 1928), pp. 147-161; notes on page 157.

12 C. Siegfried & H. Gelzer, *Eusebii Canonum Epitome ex Dionysii Telmaharensis Chronico petita* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1884), p. 36.

13 Jennifer Knust, "Chronicon Paschale" in Eric Orlin [ed.], *Routledge Encyclopedia of Ancient Mediterranean Religions* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2016), pp. 184-5.

14 Cf. Adolf Bauer, *Anonymi Chronographia syntomos e codice Matritensi no. 121 (nunc 4701)* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1909), p. 41.10-13.

15 P. Athanassiadi & M. Frede, *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 16.

philosopher<sup>16</sup>. The changes imposed to Eusebius's testimony, however, were merely vocabular, speech adaptations to the proposed theosophical hermeneutics.

4.1.3. *Sozomen and Anatolius's legacy*. Also in the fifth century, a contextualized account on Aristobulus is provided by Salaminius Hermias Sozomen (c. 400 – 450), a church historian of Palestinian descent radicated in Constantinople, in his own *Historia Ecclesiastica*<sup>17</sup>. Sozomen lived as a lawyer in the great Byzantine capital and, as opposed to his contemporary Jerome, "he himself never entered the religious life, and though Christian, always remained very much the layman"<sup>18</sup>, avoiding theological matters.

No surprise that Sozomen, although he is explicitly aware of Eusebius, refrained from deep incursions into Aristobulus's arguments of Greek dependence on Jews, or Jewish anteriority in face of Greeks, but rather kept his mind on the philosopher's astrological discussion on the date for Passover sacrifices, preserved by Anatolius in Fragment 1 (Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 129-133=*H.E.* 7.32.14-18). The text reads as follows:

[...] Ἐβραίων τῶν πάλαι, ὡς ἱστορεῖ Εὐσέβιος, ὑπὸ μάρτυσι τε Φίλωνι καὶ Ἰωσήφῳ καὶ Ἀριστοβούλῳ καὶ ἑτέροις πλείστοις, μετὰ ἑαρινὴν ἰσημερίαν τὰ διαβατήρια θυόντων, ἡλίου τὸ πρῶτον δωδεκατημόριον τμήμα ὀδεύοντος, ὃ κριὸν Ἕλληνες καλοῦσιν, ἐν διαμέτρῳ δὲ τῆς σελήνης.<sup>19</sup>

[...] The ancient Hebrews, as is related by Eusebius on the testimony of Philo, Josephus, Aristobulus, and several others, offered the sacrifices after the vernal equinox, when the sun is in the first sign of the zodiac, called by the Greeks the Ram, and when the moon is in the opposite quarter of the heavens.<sup>20</sup>

Although he namely references "Eusebius's testimony"<sup>21</sup> (ὡς ἱστορεῖ Εὐσέβιος) on the subject, Sozomen forgets to mention Anatolius, the original preserver of the passage upon which he is based, likely having had access to it only through the Eusebian compilation. More importantly to our discussion, Sozomen's testimony discreetly brings light to the similarity between the Jewish and Greek systems of astronomical interpretation, when he mentions the

16 The excerpt of Aristobulus's fragment 3 quoted in the *Theosophia Tubingensis* (Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 150-153=*P.E.* 13.12.1a) is that which states that "Plato followed the tradition of the law [...] and] obviously worked through each of the details expressed in it". A lot more will further be elucidated on this and the other fragments, for now it is enough to note that the argument suits the objectives of the *Theosophia*.

17 Joseph Bidez & Christian Hansen [eds.], *Sozomen. Historia Ecclesiastica*. [GCS 50] (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1960), p. 380.9-15.

18 Glenn F. Chesnut, *The First Christian Histories: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Evagrius*. 2nd edit., revised and enlarged (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1986), p. 192.

19 Bidez & Hansen, op. cit., p. 380.10-15.

20 Chester D. Hartranft [ed.], *The Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen: Comprising a History of the Church from A.D. 323 to A.D. 425*. [NPNF 2] (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Company), p. 389.

21 Namely, Eusebius's *H.E.* 7.32.16 (Schwartz [GCS 9(2)], pp. 722.28,724.1-724.6).

Greeks' equivalent for the celestial quarter of the spring equinox: the zodiac sign of the Ram (ὁ κριὸν), meaning Aries, in the Latin tradition.

Also, making reference to the terms used by Aristobulus in his explanations about the movement of the celestial bodies, Sozomen places the philosopher besides Philo and Josephus in the tradition of offering "sacrifices" (διαβατήρια) after the "vernal equinox" (ἑαρινὴν ἰσημερίαν). Indeed, Runia points out that "at the time of Philo, as Anatolius tells us, the Passover was always celebrated after the spring equinox"<sup>22</sup> - and the same is true in Josephus' records, although their theological interpretations of the ritual also dissent in many ways<sup>23</sup>.

Moreover, an identical recension of Fragment preserved by Anatolius appears in an extended translation of Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica*<sup>24</sup>, written by another contemporary to Jerome, who even met him: Rufinus of Aquileia (c. 345-410)<sup>25</sup>. A monk, theologian and historian of the city in the Italian peninsula, during the late fourth, Rufinus traveled the Eastern Mediterranean as far as Jerusalem, bringing "to the West and [... preserving] for subsequent generations the richness of Eastern thought"<sup>26</sup>. The monk became known for his translation of the Church Fathers, specially Origen.

On Aristobulus's interpretation of the Passover, more will be further outlined under the direct analysis of his Frg. 1, although both the text and its testimonies reveal very little about the philosopher's historical character and its social context. For now, it is enough to stress, from the discussion above, that Eusebius's recompilation of Aristobulus's fragments in the early fourth century was responsible for allowing the large dissemination of his testimony in early Byzantine literature, through which the philosopher's legacy echoed throughout six centuries in various areas of the empire.

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22 David T. Runia, "Eusebius of Caesarea", in *Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature, Volume 3: Philo in Early Christian Literature* (Boston, Leiden: Brill, 1993), p. 323.

23 For a comparative discussion between Aristobulus's, Philo's and Josephus' interpretations of the Passover, see Federico M. Collauti, "The setting within Jewish literature", in *Passover in the Works of Josephus* (Boston, Leiden, Köln: Brill, 2002) pp. 168-174. Cf. also J. W. McKay, "The Date of Passover and its Significance", in *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, vol. 84 (1972).

24 Anatolius apud Rufinus, in Theodor Mommsen apud E. Schwartz [ed.], *Eusebius Werke, Band 2: Die Lateinische Übersetzung des Rufinus* [GCS 47] (Leipzig: Hinrichssche Buchhandlung, 1908), pp. 722.16-725.

25 William H. Freemantle, "Rufinus of Aquileia", in Henry Wace [ed.], *A Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature to the End of the Sixth Century A.D.* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2000), pp. 1423-28.

26 Coleen H. Gowans, "The Church History of Rufinus of Aquileia, Books 10 and 11", in *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, vol. 7, n. 1 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 185.

4.1.4. *Origenes of Alexandria*. The testimonies analyzed insofar are directly or indirectly dependent on Eusebius, who is in turn dependent on Clement, as are all the accounts after him about Aristobulus. The only possible exemption, roughly a hundred years before Eusebius, is provided by Origenes of Alexandria, a critical pupil of Clement, also considered a Church Father<sup>27</sup>, if not the most important of them. In about 248<sup>28</sup>, Origen wrote a relatively large account, in Greek, on the works of Philo and Aristobulus in a passage of his *Contra Celsum*<sup>29</sup>, the most influential treatise of early Christian apologetics. As the title predicts, the book consists in an extended response to anti-Christian polemics put forward before by Celsus, a Greek philosopher of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century C. E., early criticist of Christianity.

As matter fact, in the excerpt which testifies for Aristobulus, Origen directly answers a quote from Celsus' treatise *On The True Doctrine* (Λόγος Ἀληθείας)<sup>30</sup>, likely written circa 178<sup>31</sup>, which regards the Christian allegories as "shameful" and "preposterous". Origen counter-arguments, as one can see below, by mentioning Judeo-hellenistic allegorists:

Δοκεῖ δέ μοι καὶ ἀκηκοέναι ὅτι ἐστὶ συγγράμματα περιέχοντα τὰς τοῦ νόμου ἀλληγορίας, ἅπερ εἰ ἀνεγνώκει, οὐκ ἂν ἔλεγεν· "αἱ γοῦν δοκούσαι περὶ αὐτῶν ἀλληγορίαὶ γεγράφαται πολὺ τῶν μύθων αἰσχίους εἰσὶ καὶ ἀτοπώτεραι, τὰ μηδαμῆ μηδαμῶς ἀπιμοσθῆναι δυνάμενα θαυμαστῆ τι καὶ παντάπασιν ἀναισθητῶ μωρία συνάπτουσαι." ἔοικε δὲ περὶ τῶν Φίλωνος συγγραμμάτων ταῦτα λέγειν ἢ καὶ τῶν ἐπι ἀρχαιοτέρων, ὁποῖά ἐστι τὰ Ἀριστοβούλου. στοχάζομαι δὲ τὸν Κέλσον μὴ ἀνεγνοκέσαι τὰ βιβλία, ἐπεὶ πολλαχοῦ οὕτως ἐπιτετεύχθαι μοιφαίνεται, ὥστε αἰρεθῆναι ἂν καὶ τοὺς ἐν Ἑλληνιστῶν φιλοσοφοῦντας ἀπὸ τῶν λεγομένων· ἐν οἷς οὐ μόνον φράσεις ἐξήσκῃται ἀλλὰ καὶ νοήματα καὶ ἡ χρῆσις τῶν, ὡς οἶεται, ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν μύθων ὁ Κέλσος.<sup>32</sup>

He (Celsus) seems to me to have heard also that there treatises containing allegories of the law. But if he had read them he would not have said: "At any rate, the allegories which seem to have been written about them are far more shameful and preposterous than the myths, since they connect with some amazing and utterly senseless folly ideas which cannot by any means be made to fit". He appears by this to mean the works of Philo or even writers still earlier such as the writings of Aristobulus. But I hazard the guess that Celsus has not read the

27 For an overview on the Church Fathers in the light of Clement and Origen, see David Ivan Rankin, *From Clement to Origen: The Social and Historical Context of the Church Fathers* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2006).

28 If we follow Eusebius's *H.E.* 6.36.1-3, "the work was written [...] during the reign of Philip the Arab (244-9 CE), when Origen was already over 60. There is no evidence with which to question Eusebius's date" (Michael Frede, "Origen's treatise *Against Celsus*" in Edwards, Goodman, Price & Rowland [eds.], *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews and Christians* [Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999], p. 131).

29 Origen, *Contra Celsum* 4.51, in Paul Koetschau [ed.], *Origenes Werke, Band I: Die Schrift vom Martyrium, Book I-IV Gegen Celsus* [GCS 1] (Leipzig: Hinrichssche Buchhandlung, 1908), p. 324.6-18. For a complete commented translation, see Henry Chadwick, *Origen: Contra Celsum. Translated with an Introduction and Notes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), p. 226.

30 R. Joseph Hoffmann, *On the True Doctrine: A Discourse Against the Christians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

31 "A reference to joint emperors in the *Discourse* (*Contra Celsum* 8.71) [...] strongly suggests the period of Marcus Aurelius. It appears likely that Celsus wrote the *True Discourse against the Christians* c. 178 CE" (Michael Bland Simmons, "Graeco-Roman philosophical opposition" in Philip F. Esler [ed.], *The Early Christian World*, vol. 2 [London, New York: Taylor & Francis, 2005], p. 128).

32 Koetschau [GCS 1], p. 324.6-18.

books, for I think that in many places they are so successful that even Greek philosophers would have been won over by what they say. Not only have they an attractive style; but they also discuss ideas and doctrines, making use of the "myths" (as Celsus regards them) in the scriptures.<sup>33</sup>

The subject of this brief but very elucidative excerpt are the allegories of the Law (νόμου ἀλληγορίας) which Origen supposes that Celsus mentions in his book as a reference to Aristobulus and Philo, whose works, in return, the Christian guesses he had not read. The intrigue between Celsus and Origen is self-evident, Greek anti-Christian polemics; what mostly concerns us are the insights that this testimony provides on Aristobulus's philosophical view, even though the Christian speaks rather generally about him, in conjunction with Philo.

For starters, far from an ingenuous accusation, Origen's supposition that Celsus had not actually read the allegorists' works, on its own, may, say a lot about the Greek reception of Aristobulus's writings. Although provocative, the claim is likely true, since "Greek interest in Judaism was superficial [... and] their attitude was [...] determined by Greek stereotypes of eastern peoples rather than by observation"<sup>34</sup>, as Collins explains. There is a slight possibility, though, that Celsus had actually read those books and Origen's claim was nothing but an ironic attack and, if that is the case, this might say a lot about the little appeal that the Jewish allegories were able to reach among the Greeks.

Also, Origen points out an important feature in Aristobulus's philosophy: the use of the Scriptures' principles understood, just as much as the Greek ones, as "myths", connecting them with ideas that successfully make them "fit" to Hellene philosophies, as opposed to what had defended Celsus. With that understanding of the Law, the philosopher pioneerly erects the Jews to a plan of equality with the Greeks under these last ones' own criticism, making use of their rethorics and their theological conceptions to prove the validity of Judaism.

Overall, although insightful, Origen's testimony on Aristobulus does not edge very further beyond that; regardless of being one of the longest descriptive passage on the philosopher along with Anatolius's misinformed testimony, almost nothing in it is not obviously taken from Clement, an undebateable possibility given their close relationship.

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In general, as one might have noticed, the testimonies of Aristobulus after Clement adhere very closely to that of his own, not surprisingly, since it was followed and passed

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<sup>33</sup> Henry Chadwick, op. cit., p. 226.

<sup>34</sup> J. J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Livonia: Dove Booksellers, 2000), p. 6.



along in Christian literature by Eusebius. But underwhelmingly, they do not add a lot to the previous image we had about Aristobulus; on the contrary, most of them seem largely to solely state the same with less or just different words. The subsequent versions of the Chronicle obviously maintain Eusebius's testimony of a Jewish Peripatetic philosopher who wrote commentaries addressed to Ptolemy Philometor explaining the law of Moses, summing up the very clarifying date of 164 BCE, when Aristobulus "became known" (*agnoscitur*<sup>35</sup>).

Origen may provide a very elucidative insight on the reception of allegories of the Law such as the one authored by Aristobulus among the Greeks, but does not quite elucidate his character. It is remarkable that his and Jerome's testimony summed up with those of Clement, Anatolius, and Eusebius ones and the great ramification of Aristobulus's testimoniality after them already allow us to recognize a pattern: the widespread awareness of the philosopher's work and life throughout the second, third and fourth centuries CE, and not only within the Christian circles. At least this is what Origen suggests when he points out the possibility for Celsus, a Greek anti-Christian philosopher, to have actually read Aristobulus's allegorical writings; one could easily conclude that this means that the philosopher's work figured, then, among the canons of Jewish allegory, besides Philo and others.

In all cases, although they do confirm important features pointed out by Eusebius and Clement and illustrate the amplitude that Aristobulus's writings were able to attain mixed within Christian literature, those later testimonies most certainly do not mention any political reputation or representative function assigned to the Jewish philosopher, inferred from II Maccabees 1:10. As a matter of fact, it seems that, with the passing of Late Antiquity, the biblical tradition on Aristobulus was forgotten, being its features' reliability no further investigated until modern studies, in spite of the wide spread of the Clement-Eusebius.

Thus, the testimonies approached in this chapter perform, most of all, a large confirmation function to the first part of our hypothesis: the Jewish allegorical philosopher – as we have stated before. attested by at least three, but clearly rather more direct and independent witnesses. All in all, we are still stuck with this allegedly Peripatic, but not quite, Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, whose social reputation and political role is indirectly referenced in the second book of an apocryphal writing of the Bible, but apparently not ever accounted by any other source. Since we are now apparently out of options, may we then finally address the biblical testimony of II Maccabees on Aristobulus, *a priori* the only testimony available on the second part of the hypothesis about his character, pioneerly defended by Walter.

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35 Or "has won recognition"; cf. Helm [GCS 47], p. 139.2-6.

## CHAPTER V

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### CONTEMPORARY SOURCES AND THE SOCIAL AUTHORITY

It seems that, although we have managed to provide large validation for the historical figure of Aristobulus as testified by Clement, Origen, Eusebius and their subsequent followers, the character accounted by the testimony of II Maccabees still lacks evidence aside from the biblical passage. Regardless of the Christian sources identifying the philosopher as the authority addressed in II Macc 1:10, the features about Aristobulus registered in it remain unexplained and the connection with the allegorical philosopher Aristobulus is tenuous. Let us, therefore, finally explore the contents of this apocryphal book, minding for its authenticity issues, in order to better comprehend what we are looking at.

#### 5. The contemporary account of II Maccabees

The Second Book of Maccabees<sup>1</sup>, as we have it, consists of three originally independent texts composed in different times, which however add up to the same argumentation, likely having been later joint together by the author of the third, more central excerpt of the book. The first two interpolated texts (1:1-10a and 1:10b-2:18) are both letters from the Jews of Jerusalem to their countrymen in Egypt, with the same subject but from distinct dates, the second and earlier of which is addressed to Aristobulus. The third text (2:19-15:39), for its turn, a later, longer and more narrative epitome, is allegedly the summarization of a work written by Jason of Cyrene on some of the events referred in the letters, as allerts the anonymous author in its preface<sup>2</sup>.

The motif of the second introductory letter (1:10b-2:18), which mostly concerns us, later reiterated by the first one (1:1-10a), is inviting the Jews of Egypt to join in an annual

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- 1 The classical researches on the apocryphon are Arnaldo Momigliano, *Prime linee di storia della tradizione maccabaica* (Rome: Foro Italiano, 1930); and Elias Bickerman, *Der Gott der Makkabäer* (Berlin: Schocken Verlag, 1937). More recently, some of the most irreverent analyses are provided by F. M. Abel, *Les Livres des Maccabées* (Paris: Gabalda, 1949); Abel & Starcky, *Les Livres des Maccabées* (Paris, Cerf., 1961); J. G. Bunge, *Untersuchungen zum Zweiten Makkabäerbuch* (Bonn: Diss. Phil., 1971), pp. 690-733; Momigliano, "The Second Book of Maccabees" in *Classical Philology*, vol. 70, n. 2 (Apr., 1975), pp. 81-88; C. C. Torrey, "Die Briefe 2 Macc 1:1-2:18", *Zur Kanongeschichte des Alten Testaments*, vol. 20 [ZAW 20] (Berlin: Gruyter, 1900); B. Niese, *Kritik der beiden Makkabäerbücher* (Berlin: Weidmannsche, 1900).
  - 2 Cf. [NRSV], II Maccabees, 2:19-23. Jason of Cyrene is another little known Hellenistic Jew who lived at the end of the second century BCE; the epitome in II Maccabees, which was confessedly an altered summary of Jason's original work, is his only available literary legacy.

festival (ἐγκαινισμός<sup>3</sup>), recently decreed to be practiced every Kislev 25<sup>4</sup>, celebrating the temple's rebuilding after its profanation by Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Syria, followed by the king's death. The first letter is explicitly dated in a year of one of the Seleucid Eras: 188 (ca. 124 BCE) and, as Momigliano points out, "in the most likely interpretation, refers to a previous letter on the same subject of the year 169"<sup>5</sup> (ca. 143 BCE). That, for its turn, unknown to us, is *not* the subsequently presented letter, the one likely addressed to our Aristobulus, but concerns the same invitation.

The second letter itself, the part of II Maccabees which mostly concerns us, "is dated indirectly by the very recent death of Antiochus IV, which we know from the cuneiform B(ritish) M(useum) tablet 35603 to have occurred in the eighth or ninth month of the Seleucid Babylonian year of 148, that is, about November-December of 164 BCE"<sup>6</sup>, as Sachs and Wiseman show, in conformity with Aristobulus's alleged date. This dating of 164 BCE, though, just by a thin amount of time, is one of the main concerns over the letter's authenticity under the light of evidence found in other documents, as we will see ahead.

In return, Jason's epitome consists in "a somewhat incoherent conglomeration of [...] motifs, [...] from] interventions of supernatural beings in events relating to the temple [...] until the] leadership of Judah Maccabee"<sup>7</sup>, harshly correlated with the letters' content. The presented sequence of events, however, described in the compiler's preface as the story "put forth by Jason of Cyrene in five volumes, [...] which they should] attempt to condense into a single book"<sup>8</sup>, present some deep inconsistencies with that accounted by the letters. Although the epitome provides an account on the death of Antiochus IV (9:28-9) as well and, at its very end, also mentions a festival decreed to be celebrated (15:36), its versions of those historical facts are considerably different. As Momigliano explains:

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- 3 Presented in the genitive singular, the term refers in the letters to the dedication, or consagrator of the temple of Jerusalem; cf. I Macc 4:56-9 in Rahlfs [LXX], p. 1692 and II Macc 2:9-19 in *ibid.*, p. 1768-9. Ἐγκαίνια, the nominative plural of same radical, is pointed out in John as an already established Feast of the Dedication (Lat. *Encaenia*); cf. [NRSV] John 10:22. In the Hebrew version of the Bible, most remarkably, "the translation for the *Encaenia* is Hanukkah" (Ora Limor, *Holy Land Travels: Christian Pilgrims in Late Antiquity* [Yad Izhak: Ben-Zvi Press, 1998], the millenary Jewish festival, not by coincidence, traditionally practiced in Kislev 25.
  - 4 The twenty-fifth day of the ninth Jewish month of Kislev, approximately the beginning of December in the Gregorian calendar.
  - 5 Momigliano, "The Second Book of Maccabees" in *Classical Philology*, vol. 70, n. 2 (Apr., 1975), p. 81.
  - 6 *Idem.* British Museum tablet no. 35603 is published in A. J. Sachs & D. J. Wiseman, "A Babylonian King List of the hellenistic period", in *Iraq*, XVI (1954), pp. 202-11.
  - 7 *Ibid.*, p. 85. Judah Maccabee (d. 160 BCE) was a mostly known priest in Palestine, reputed for leading the Maccabean Revolt (167-164 BCE); see Abraham Schalit, "Judah Maccabee" in Fred Skolnik, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., vol. 21 (New York: Macmillan, 2006), pp. 509-11.
  - 8 [NRSV], II Maccabees, 2:23.

Indeed, the story of the murder of Antiochus IV in the second letter is at sharp variance with the story of the natural death of the king told in chapter 9. Furthermore II Maccabees ends with an account of the institution of a festival of 13 Adar to celebrate Judas' victory over Nicanor in the Seleucid year of 151 (160 BCE). This festival could not of course be within the horizon of the writer of the second letter (*ex hypothesi*, ca. 148 Sel.), but is ignored by the writer of the first letter.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, as the historian argues, since the epitome is clearly a later gloss and no explanation is offered for the previous citation of the letters, even though they appear to perform an exemplary function along with the narrative, we can only speculate about the connection between the texts. Momigliano suggests that "the simplest conjecture is that somebody was asked to compile a summary of Jason which could be sent to Egypt in support of the invitation contained in the letters"<sup>10</sup>, being II Maccabees result of a later compilation with the goal of emphasizing the holliness of the temple of Jerusalem.

In that interpretation, the work would have been written about 124 BCE and, "like the introductory letters, [... it] would try to keep the Jews of Egypt within the influence the temple"<sup>11</sup>, by persuading them to join the celebrations of *Encaenea*. It is in that sense that the epitome provides a summary of the incredible, sometimes miraculous, events which took place after the temples' reconsecration by Judah Maccabee and his followers. This hypothesis, however, lacks evidence in other sources and, more importantly, in the very text, which would be expected to at least mentions this features in the compiler's preface.

That said, as does Momigliano and the vast majority of scholars on II Maccabees, we will hereafter make "no effort [...] to connect the letters in question with any part of the narrative text that follows"<sup>12</sup>. Rather concentrating on the authenticity issues which jump to sight when it comes to the relation between the epistles themselves and their respective datings, we will now focus on the external criticism of the second letter with respect to the other, and then finally advance to the former's textual and contextual analysis.

**5.1. Authenticity and dating of the letters.** It is remarkable that the external critics of the I Maccabees and II Maccabees, to begin with, have a close relation to each other, being their claims of authenticity, as far as scholar tradition goes, deemed mutually excludent. Traditionally, I Maccabees has been understood as a mostly authentic historical account, as II Maccabees, for its turn, was always considered to be a more mythical narrative, with little

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<sup>9</sup> Momigliano, op. cit., p. 81-2.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 87.

connection to reality; in both cases, this consensus is recently changing for the opposite. As Bloesch argues, although most scholars "deem I Maccabees as overall historically reliable, [while] II Maccabees contains considerable theological interpretation, [...] this author is too historically competent"<sup>13</sup>. In his critical introduction to the New Testament, Holladay is very precise on this matter, when he points out that

the presence or absence of miraculous or mythological elements does not necessarily provide a reliable gauge for determining historicity. Many scholars once assumed that the account of the Maccabean revolt in I Maccabees was more historically reliable than II Maccabees because the latter employed so many mythological and legendary elements. By contrast, I Maccabees looked as though it was much more straightforward and unembellished. Recent scholarship, however, tends to view the sequence of events reported in II Maccabees as more probable in spite of its highly embellished features.<sup>14</sup>

Therefore, we are allowed to consistently consider the historical features of the letters in the beginning of II Macc, in order to clarify Aristobulus's figure and social context. The first letter refers to a much later context than that assigned to the philosopher, with a brief account on one of the Maccabean revolts during the reign of Demetrius, in 143 BCE<sup>15</sup>, and written still later. As the following verses show, the epistle requests the Egyptian Jews to "keep the festival of booths in the month of Kislev, in the one hundred eighty-eighth year [of the Seleucid Era]"<sup>16</sup>, that is, in 124 BCE, the earliest dating possible for the text. Nevertheless, Momigliano, along with most scholars on the theme, "take the first letter as a genuine message of Jerusalem Jews to their brethren in Egypt, but [are ...] not so sure about the authenticity of the second letter"<sup>17</sup>.

The second epistle presents itself as a message from "the people of Jerusalem and of Judea and the senate and Judas [Maccabaeus ...] to Aristobulus, who is of the family of the anointed priests, teacher of King Ptolemy, and to the Jews in Egypt"<sup>18</sup>. The narrative which follows the salutation deals with some questions about early Maccabean history, providing however some allegedly anachronistic accounts. Washolder explains that, although a much debated issue in the nineteenth century, as we have seen in the first chapter of this investigation, "recent scholarship is virtually unanimous in regarding this [second] epistle in part or entirely as a pseudograph"<sup>19</sup>.

13 Donald G. Bloesch, *Jesus Christ: Savior and Lord* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 1997), p. 275.

14 C. R. Holladay, *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament: Interpreting the Message and Meaning of Jesus Christ* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), p. 283.

15 [NRSV], II Maccabees 1:7-8.

16 [NRSV], II Maccabees 1:9.

17 Momigliano, op. cit., p. 84.

18 Holladay [FrHJA 3], T1, p. 114; cf. [NRSV], II Maccabees 1:10.

19 Ben-Zion Wacholder, "The Letter from Judah Maccabee to Aristobulus Is 2 Maccabees 1:10b—2:18 Authentic?", in *Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol. 49 (1978), p. 91. On the second letter's authenticity, see

That verdict was largely motivated by the scholarly orthodox erected by Bickerman's seminal seminal work on Maccabees. Based on uncertain linguistic evidence, early scholars, more notably Bickerman, had proposed datings as late as 60 BCE for the second letter of II Maccabees<sup>20</sup>, assuming that it was a later addition to the previous letter, authentically written in 124 BCE, as the reading order of the book suggests. More recently, however, under the light of new evidence such as BM 35603<sup>21</sup> and consistent studies increasingly pointing out for the reliability of major parts in the text, most scholars have assigned a date around 164/163 BCE for the letter<sup>22</sup> and conceded its authenticity at least to some extents, minding the later forgery, if so, as a brief interpolation in its central portion (1:18b-2:5)

Nevertheless, even if we consider that the text was actually written in 164 BCE, some historical incoherences emerge regarding the letter's redaction, more specifically when it comes to its account on the death of Antiochus IV (1:13-17) which, based on the testimony of BM 35603, as stated before, is used as evidence to this specific dating. In this interpretation, thus, the account of the letter is both: a) anachronistic, since the author appears to be aware of future or simultaneous events, and b) false, since the report on Antiochus IV's death does not match the version registered in other sources.

(a) As we have said, by just a thin amount of time, the usual dating of 164 BCE represents one the main arguments against the authenticity of the letter sent to Aristobulus. In this traditional interpretation, the text would have been written shortly after the death of Antiochus IV. As we have explained, the date of the king's passing is precisely known from the cuneiform tablet BM 35603, "which quotes a report that Antiochus died in the East during the month of Kislev of 148 SE"<sup>23</sup>, i. e., November-December of 164 BCE. However, in

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Habicht, *2. Makkabäerbuch*, Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit, Band I: Historische und legendarische Erzählungen, Lieferung 3 [JSHRZ 1.3] (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1976), pp. 109-202; J. A. Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries, no. 41A [AB 41A] (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 157-68, 540-45; E. Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, vol. 3 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1901-11), pp. 533-4, 537.

20 Cf. E. Bickerman, *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, vol. 32 [ZNTW 32] (Berlin: Gruyter, 1938), pp. 233-54 and F. X. J. Exler, *The Form of the Ancient Greek Letter: A Study in Greek Epistolography* (Washington: Catholic University, 1923).

21 British Museum tablet no. 35603, a cuneiform text on clay providing a report of Antiochus IV's death; cf. Sachs & Wiseman, *op. cit.*, p. 202-11. Also, I Maccabees 4:52 reports that the festival of purification was celebrated for the first time in the 25th of Kislev of 148 SE (164 BCE), shortly after the king's death.

22 Cf. Momigliano, *Hochkulturen im Hellenismus: Die Begegnung der Griechen mit Kelten, Juden, Römern und Persern*, Beck'sche Schwarze Reihe, no. 190 (München: C. H. Beck, 1979), p. 125; Momigliano, "The Second Book of Maccabees" in *Classical Philology*, vol. 70, n. 2 (Apr., 1975), pp. 81-88; and Bunge, *Untersuchungen zum Zweiten Makkabäerbuch* (Bonn: Diss. Phil., 1971), pp. 690-733.

23 Wacholder, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

expectation for the festival's upcoming, the author of the letter appears or pretends to be writing before Kislev 25 – before enough that the Jews in Egypt could join in the celebrations.

This can be directly inferred from 1:18a and 2:16, two very elucidative excerpts of the letter concerning the Festival of the Purification of the Temple; they announce:

Μέλλοντες ἄγειν ἐν τῷ Χασελευ πέμπτη καὶ εἰκάδι τὸν καθαρι σμὸν τοῦ ἱεροῦ δέον ἡγησάμεθα διασαφῆσαι ὑμῖν ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἄγητε σκηνοπηγίας καὶ τοῦ πυρός ὅτε Νεεμίας ὁ οἰκοδομήσας τὸ τε ἱερὸν καὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον ἀνήνεγκεν θυσίας.<sup>24</sup>

Since on the twenty-fifth of Kislev we shall sanctify the purification of the temple, we thought it necessary to notify you (in order that you also may sanctify [commemorate]<sup>25</sup> the feast of booths and the feast of the fire given when Nehemiah, who built the temple and the altar, offered sacrifices).<sup>26</sup>

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Μέλλοντες οὖν ἄγειν τὸν καθαρισμὸν ἐγράψαμεν ὑμῖν καλῶς οὖν ποιήσετε ἄγοντες τὰς ἡμέρας.<sup>27</sup>

Therefore, since we are about to sanctify the purification, we write to you. Will you please keep the days.<sup>28</sup>

The alleged anachronism consists in the fact that, if the dating of 164 BCE stands, the authors of the letter could not be aware of Antiochus' death, being the account rather a later interpolation, poorly forged to look earlier. On this matter, Wacholder provides a most clever and pioneer solution: his "study presents arguments against dating the letter in December of 164 BCE, as is generally assumed[... demonstrating] that the summer or fall of 163 BCE seems a more plausible date whether the document is genuine or a pseudograph"<sup>29</sup>. Nevertheless, this recently proposed interpretation solves the major objections to the historicity of the letter addressed to Aristobulus.

As Wacholder explains, "the account of Antiochus IV's death is anachronistic only if its author pretends to be writing prior to the rededication of the altar, i. e., before Kislev 25 of 148 SE"<sup>30</sup> (164 BCE), since they would be aware of the king's passing before it happens or impossibly early after. If we set the date to 163 BCE, in return, the letter's account would have been written almost a year after the event, late enough so that the Jews of Jerusalem had time to receive the news about the Syrian king. The request of joining in the celebrations sent to their Egyptian counterparts would be in expectation of the first anniversary of the rededication

24 II Maccabees 1:18a (Rahlfs [LXX], p. 1765-6).

25 The verb ἄγειν translates both *sanctify* (or make believe) and *celebrate* (or commemorate, conduct). Since both meanings are coherent with the letter's context, they are both valid and mostly interchangeable interpretations; cf. [NSRV], II Maccabees 1:18a.

26 Wacholder, op. cit., p. 102.

27 II Maccabees 2:16 (Rahlfs [LXX], p. 1769).

28 Wacholder, op. cit., p. 102.

29 Ibid., p. 92.

30 Ibid., p. 100.

festival in 149 SE, not to its first ever occurrence in 148 SE. The new date, however, is still early enough so that it justifies the mistaken testimony on Antiochus's death of the letter, simply by the generalized confusion surrounding such a recent event in Antiquity.

(b) Speaking of the letter's mistaken testimony on Antiochus IV's death, it is deemed as such because it contradicts some traditionally validated pagan reports<sup>31</sup>, more notably Polybius, according to who "the king died [...] from madness as he traveled in the East"<sup>32</sup>. In contrast, II Maccabees 1:13-17 pictures the violent murder of Antiochus and his men, ambushed and stoned by priests in Persia, after piling one of its city's temple and profanating the local goddess Nanea. The letter's account reads resumedly as follows:

εἰς τὴν Περσίδα γενόμενος γὰρ ὁ ἡγεμὼν καὶ ἡ περὶ αὐτὸν ἀνυπόστατος δοκοῦσα εἶναι δύναμις κατεκόπησαν ἐν τῷ τῆς Ναναίας ἱερῷ παραλογισμῷ χρησαμένων τῶν περὶ τὴν Ναναίαν ἱερέων. [...] καὶ προθέντων αὐτὰ τῶν ἱερέων τοῦ Ναναίου κάκεινου προσελθόντος μετ' ὀλίγων εἰς τὸν περίβολον τοῦ τεμένους συγκλείσαντες τὸ ἱερόν ὡς εἰσηλθεν Ἀντίοχος. ἀνοιξάντες τὴν τοῦ φατνώματος κρυπτὴν θύραν βάλλοντες πέτρους συνεκεραύνωσαν τὸν ἡγεμόνα καὶ μέλη ποιήσαντες καὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς ἀφελόντες τοῖς ἔξω παρέρριψαν.<sup>33</sup>

When the leader reached Persia with a force that seemed irresistible, they were cut to pieces in the temple of Nanea by a deception employed by the priests of the goddess Nanea. [...] When the priests of the temple of Nanea had set out the treasures and Antiochus had come with a few men inside the wall of the sacred precinct, they closed the temple as soon as he entered it. Opening a secret door in the ceiling, they threw stones and struck down the leader and his men; they dismembered them and cut off their heads and threw them to the people outside.<sup>34</sup>

It is remarkable that, authentic or not, the letter's wrong account on the monarch's is problematic, since a later forger would be even more likely to have had access to the official version. In that sense, although the account does not match with most sources on the passing of Antiochus IV, as Wacholder notes, "the story of an assassination while looting a temple [...] fits well with the ancient versions of the death of Antiochus III the Great"<sup>35</sup> who, according to reports in Justin, Strabo and Diodorus Siculus, was slaughtered in a temple in Elymais<sup>36</sup>. The identification of Antiochus III's death mode with that of his son illustrates the

31 Cf. Appian, *Syrian Wars* 66; Porphyry (Jerome in Daniel 11, 44f, 395). And at the Jewish side as well: Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* XII, p. 354 ff.

32 Polybius, *The Histories* 31:9 apud Wacholder, op. cit., p. 99.

33 II Maccabees 1:13, 15-16 (Rahlfs [LXX], p. 1765).

34 [NRSV] II Maccabees 1:13, 15-16.

35 Wacholder, op. cit., p. 99-100. See also E. Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart, Berlin: Cotta'sche, 1921), pp. 219-20; E. Will, *Histoire Politique du Monde Hellénistique (323-30 av. J.-C.)*, vol. 2 (Nancy: Presses Universitaires, 1967), pp. 296-8; and O. Morkholm, *Antiochus IV of Syria* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1966), pp. 170-2.

36 Cf. Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 28.3, 29.15 in F. R. Walton [ed.], *Diodorus Siculus. Library of History, Volume XI: Fragments of Books 21-32*, Loeb Classical Library, n. 409 [LCL 409] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957); Justin Martyr, *Apologiae pro Christianis* 32.2, 1-2 in M. Markovich [ed.], *Iustinis Martyris Apologia pro Christianis*, Patristische Text und Studien, no. 38 [PTS 38] (Berlin, New York, De Gruyter, 1994); Strabo, *Geographia* 16.1.18 in Horace L. Jones [ed.], *Strabo. Geography, Volume VII: Books 15-16*, Loeb Classical Library, no. 241 [LCL 241] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930).



kind of misinformation regarding such events, specially so early after, under the context of Hellenistic Near East, even when it comes to distinct authorities as them.

The official Babylonian announcement of the king's death in cuneiform, found in BM 35603, is very elucidative of this indefiniteness, reproducing only the brief wording "[Year 148], month Kislimu: it was heard that K[ing] Antiochus ..... died"<sup>37</sup>. In the proposed date of 163 BCE, likely before Kislev of 149 SE and, thus, less than one year after the accounted episode, and also written from as far as Ptolemaic Alexandria, the letter's mistaken account reflects the impreciseness of rumours on the death mode of kings in general. In the specific case of Antiochus IV, more notably, the aspect of indetermination "evidently goes back to the vagueness of the early royal bulletin announcing the monarch's mysterious disappearance"<sup>38</sup>, as Wacholder argues.

Therefore, following Wacholder's trailblazing thesis, the objections against the authenticity of the second letter of II Maccabees (1:10b-2:18) rely greatly on its inaccurate traditional dating, based on a misleading exegesis of the excerpts presented above, more notably, 1:18a and 2:16. Correcting the date to 163 BCE, thus, we solve the main concerns pointed out by recent scholars against the letter's historical reliability, though it is not yet a consensus to regard it as authentic<sup>39</sup>. Be that as it may, the author argues that "neither the charge of anachronism nor the apparent inaccuracy of the report of Antiochus IV's death impeach in any way the credibility of the document"<sup>40</sup>.

More importantly yet, when it comes to the alleged testimonies on Aristobulus of Alexandria and Judah Maccabee<sup>41</sup> provided in the letter's address (II Maccabees 1:10), the identification of the mentioned figures with these historical characters stand regardless of the authenticity of the full text. Not only none of these correlations upbrings problems to the historical reliability of the letter if understood to have been written in 164/163 BCE, for most scholars, they appear to be authentic, whether as accurate descriptions, if the document is

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37 British Museum tablet no. 35603 (transl.) in J. B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 3rd ed. [ANET 3] (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 567 apud Wacholder, op. cit., p. 101. Cf. A. J. Sachs & D. J. Wiseman, op. cit., pp. 202-11.

38 Wacholder, op. cit., 101.

39 "The common opinion remains that the letter is a forgery" (Livia Capponi, "Aristobulus and the Hieros Logos of the Egyptian Jews" in *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth International Congress of Papyrology* [Ann Arbor: American Studies in Papyrology, 2010], p. 110). In this position, see for instance Bickerman [ZNTW 32], pp. 233-54; and J. Collins, op. cit., p. 187.

40 Wacholder, op. cit., p. 100.

41 As noted above, Judah Maccabee (d. 160 BCE) was a mostly known priest in Palestine, reputed for leading the Maccabean Revolt (167-164 BCE); see Abraham Schalit, "Judah Maccabee" in Fred Skolnik, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., vol. 21 (New York: Macmillan, 2006), pp. 509-11

authentic, or as intendedly historical forgeries, if a later falsification<sup>42</sup>. In face of that, since "there is nothing in the letter's salutation or address to cast doubt on the epistle's authenticity, and much to confirm it"<sup>43</sup>, as Wacholder resumes, let us further concentrate on this, most relevant to our research, introductory part of the second letter of II Maccabees.

**5.2. The second letter's address and salutation (II Maccabees 1:10).** This brief prescript, in a letter from the Jews of Jerusalem to those in the Egyptian diaspora, regarding the celebration of an annual feast, is the earliest confirmed testimony of Aristobulus and, ironically, the one that most lacks support on other sources. II Maccabees 1:10 provides a nominal introduction of the authorities in Jerusalem, followed by a flattering presentation of the Alexandrian philosopher, spoke to on behalf of the Jews in Egypt and, finally, a typical greeting formula; as one can see below:

Οἱ ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις καὶ οἱ ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ καὶ ἡ γερουσία καὶ Ἰούδας Ἀριστοβούλῳ διδασκάλῳ Πτολεμαίου τοῦ βασιλέως, ὄντι δὲ ἀπὸ τοῦ τῶν χριστῶν γένους, καὶ τοῖς ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ Ἰουδαίοις χαίρειν καὶ ὑγιαίνειν.<sup>44</sup>

The people of Jerusalem and of Judea and the senate and Judas,  
To Aristobulus, who is of the family of the anointed priests, teacher of King Ptolemy, and to the  
Jews in Egypt,  
Greetings, and good health.<sup>45</sup>

"Nearly everyone agrees that the Judah referred to here is identical with Judah Maccabee and that Aristobulus is the Judaeo-Greek writer of the same name"<sup>46</sup>, as Wacholder explains. The historical character of Judah Maccabee, the Jewish priestly warrior who led the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucid Empire (167–164 BCE), for its turn, is compatible with that of Aristobulus of Alexandria, since Judah died in 161/160 BCE<sup>47</sup> and Aristobulus, as treated before, is consistently dated in the time of Ptolemy VI Philometor, who reigned from 180 to 145 BCE<sup>48</sup>. These identifications, therefore, cast no suspicion on the letter's authenticity; on the contrary, they provide a solid historical background to it.

42 See, for instance, Bunge, op. cit., pp. 53-55; Habicht [JSHRZ 1.3], p. 202; Goldstein, [AB 41A], p. 545; C. L. W. Grimm, *Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zu den Apokryphen des Alten Testaments* (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1857), pp. 36-7; and C. F. Keil, *Commentar über die Bücher der Makkabäer* (Leipzig: Dörffling and Franke), pp. 270-1.

43 Wacholder, op. cit., p. 98.

44 II Maccabees 1:10 in Holladay [FrHJA 3], T1, p. 114=Hanhart [Göttingen LXX 9(2)], p. 48=Rahlfs [LXX], p. 1765.

45 II Maccabees 1:10 (transl.) in Holladay [FrHJA 3], T1, p. 114.

46 Wacholder, op. cit., p. 93. Major studies on behalf of Aristobulus's authenticity, as presented before, were L. C. Valckenaer, *Diatribē de Aristobulo Judaeo; philosopho peripatetico alexandrino* (Lugdunum Batavorum: Luchtmans, 1806) and N. Walter, *Der Thoraausleger Aristobulos* (TU 86; Berlin: Akademie, 1964).

47 A. Schalit, op. cit., p. 511.

48 Cf. Günther Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire* (London, New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 143-52.

As one can see, the prescript objectively presents the senders of the letter, apparently in order of importance, and then, with closer attention, its recipient, followed by a Greek salutation formula: *χαίρειν καὶ ὑγιαίνειν* (lit., "be well and have good health"). Although it looks trivial, the greeting is one of the most debated matters concerning this passage, traditionally used as evidence against its historical reliability, more specifically, involving the letter's dating. As mentioned above, in his treatment of II Maccabees, Bickerman proposed a date around 60 BCE for the second letter<sup>49</sup> – the salutation above, on this purpose, is the core evidence upon which he does so.

According to Bickerman, *χαίρειν καὶ ὑγιαίνειν* is a variation of an older formula of common usage in priesthood, which became fashionable as early as the beginning of the third century BCE and was later assimilated to Latin by Romans as *formula valedutinis*<sup>50</sup>. The historian, however, argues that this variation of the *formula valedutinis* came into general use in Egypt only a century later than the alleged dating of the letter, around 56/57 BCE, using it as proof that the document is a forgery of the first century BCE onwards<sup>51</sup>. Even though many scholars still advocate this interpretation, the argument is based on fragile evidence.

Livia Capponi points out as a major counterexample "one earlier instance of this greeting, in a fourth century BCE public document, namely the lead tablet from Mnesiergos"<sup>52</sup>, i. e., the letter in *SIG<sup>3</sup> III 1259*<sup>53</sup>. Although we lack further evidence for the early use of the salutation, as Hans-Josef Klauck, the original publisher of this tablet, argues: "this derivation of the infinitive *χαίρειν* (and *ὑγιαίνειν*) can still be readily retraced in a text from the fourth century BCE engraved on both sides of a lead tablet that is considered one of the oldest preserved Greek private letters"<sup>54</sup>. Bickerman himself admits that *χαίρειν* was the *salutatio* generally used in "the normal *praescriptio* of a Greek letter, found in 80% of all

49 Bickerman [ZNTW 32], pp. 233-55.

50 The *formula valedutinis* reads in Latin as *si vales, bene est, ego valeo* ("if you're healthy, that is good, I am well"); the original Greek salutation appeared as *εἰ ἔρρωσαι τὸ δέον ἂν εἴη καὶ γὼ δὲ ὑγιαίνων* and variants, meaning something like "if you may be healthy and free of needings, so am I". Cf. Bickerman, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History: A New Edition in English including The God of the Maccabees*, vol. 1 [SJCH 1] (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007), p. 118-9; F. Ziemann, "De epistolarum formulis solemnibus" in *Diss. Phil. Halens* 13.4 (1910), pp. 304-317.

51 Bickerman, [SJCH 1], p. 119, viz. note 47: "The new formula appears e. g. in BGU VIII, 1871 (57/56 BCE), 1873, 1874, 1878, 1880, 1881. It was very popular in the first century CE, and disappeared c. 100". On dating II Maccabees, see Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 167-200 and [ZNTW 32], pp. 233-54.

52 L. Capponi, op. cit., p. 110. On the tablet of Mnesiergos, see H.-J. Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006) pp. 19-21 and 267-68.

53 This letter is available in M.

54 Klauck, op. cit., p. 19.

surviving papers"<sup>55</sup>; and also that, as early as 270 BCE, ὑγιαίνειν was commonly inserted after salutations as a "declaration about the welfare of the writer and the reader"<sup>56</sup> – which points out for the plausible use of the full sentence simply as a mix of both formulas.

Also, as Wacholder argues, the order of presentation of the characters in the preceding address stands against the later date proposed by Bickerman<sup>57</sup>. As one can see above, while the prescript presents Aristobulus first among the recipients, with honourable, Judah is the last to be cited of all senders, with no postscript on his behalf. It is just senseless that, by 60 BCE or so, Aristobulus would be regarded as a bigger authority than Judah Maccabee, the main leader of the Maccabean Revolt, by the Jews of Jerusalem. "The letter's caption would make sense, however, if written in about 163"<sup>58</sup>, as Wacholder suggests, before the anniversary of the Festival of Purification in Kislev 25 of 149 SE (November-December of 163 BCE). At that time, accordingly, Judah had not yet attained the prestige gained after his victory over Lysias and Nicanor, respectively, in late 164 and in 161 BCE<sup>59</sup>.

Last case, it results that, under the light of recent analyses, the sole evidence of the greeting formula is not enough to place the letter more than a hundred years after its alleged time. Thus, the letter's prescript should be fully regarded as authentic, and the late dating proposed by Bickerman based on its final salutation should be seen as outdated – one is safer to place the document in 164/163 BCE, as argued before. We can therefore take out of our way the concerns about the reliability of this passage and concentrate hereafter on its actual content rather than on ready formulas.

The address of the letter, as one can see above, announces the peoples of Jerusalem and Judea as senders, represented by the formers' senate (γερονσία, "council of elders") and Judah Maccabee, this prominent warrior priest in the Maccabean Revolt that was in course. They collectively send this message to Aristobulus who, in return, is complimented as a prestigious representant of the Jews in Egypt, with great honors in religion and achievements in the public life. In this flattering atmosphere of officiality, referred to not only on behalf of their cities but under the signature of the Gerusia of Jerusalem, it is clear that the individual

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55 Bickerman, [SJCH 1], p. 117.

56 Bickerman, [SJCH 1], p. 118.

57 Wacholder, op. cit., pp. 94-95.

58 Ibid., p. 95.

59 On the dates of Lysias' and Nicanor's defeat by the Jews under the command of Judah, see S. P. Tucker, "164 BCE" and "161 BCE" in *A Global Chronology of Conflict: From the Ancient World to the Modern Middle East*, vol. 1 (Oxford, Denver, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), p. 104.

characters that are mentioned here are both major authorities. Allow us to concentrate more carefully on the description of Aristobulus, who mostly concerns us<sup>60</sup>.

Holladay explains, "the earliest testimony to a Jewish figure named Aristobulus occurs in the epistolary prescript of the letter from Palestinian Jews to Egyptian Jews in II Macc 1:10-2:18"<sup>61</sup>, exactly in the passage quoted above. One might have noted that the letter portrays a historical figure that looks very different from the Aristobulus we have been working with throughout this investigation, and from what we have seen that ancient compilers and modern scholars were able to conclude about him. However, the Egyptian Jewish authority addressed in II Maccabees 1:10 can be proven compatible with the Jewish philosopher who wrote the fragments – as we have discussed in the prior chapters that Clement and Eusebius identify and Walter modernly demonstrates<sup>62</sup>.

Willrich argues that, as both Church fathers identified, there is no doubt that the same Aristobulus is meant in II Macc 1:10, "because even [... the author of the letter] calls his Aristobulus the teacher of King Ptolemy, and for Ptolemy only Philometor can be understood"<sup>63</sup>, as the external information on the historical facts accounted point out. In short, even for those who doubt Aristobulus's existence, there is no reasonable ground to question that the Jewish philosopher quoted by the Christians and the Jewish Ptolemaic authority mentioned in II Maccabees are the same person.

This constatation emerges quite easily from the collation of all aforementioned evidence, more notably of Eusebius's testimony with that of II Macc 1:10. It would be a surprising coincidence if there had been two different Aristobulus, both of them Jews who lived in Ptolemaic Egypt, during the mid-second century BCE. Even odder yet, both of them associated to king Ptolemy VI Philometor himself – one for having written philosophical commentaries addressed to him (*qui ad philometorem ptolemaion explanationum in moysen commentarios scripsit*<sup>64</sup>) and another for having been his "teacher" (διδασκάλῳ Πτολεμαίου τοῦ βασιλέως<sup>65</sup>), as the letter testifies.

60 More specifically on the mention of Judah Maccabee, see Torrey [ZAW 20], pp. 229-34; Niese, op. cit., p. 16; Abel & Starcky, *Les Livres des Maccabées* (Paris, Cerf., 1961); J. G. Bunge, *Untersuchungen zum Zweiten Makkabäerbuch* (Bonn: Diss. Phil., 1971), p. 29.

61 Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 45.

62 Walter, op. cit., pp. 124-49.

63 H. Willrich, *Juden und Griechen vor der makkabäischen Erhebung* (Göttingen : Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895), p. 162.

64 Eusebius *Chronica*, 176 a. Chr. in Rudolf Helm [ed.], *Eusebius Werke, Band 7: Die Chronik des Hieronymus* [GCS 47] (Leipzig: Hinrichssche Buchhandlung, 1913), p. 139.2-6.

65 Cf. II Maccabees 1:10b above. Ancient and moderns historians agree that the "King Ptolemy" referred to here could only be Philometor; cf. Clement *Strom.* 1.22.150.1 (Holladay [FrHJA 3], T3, p. 115=Stählin

Holladay explains that "as much as this brief prescript tells us, [...] it does not attribute any writings to Aristobulus; nor would we expect it to do so"<sup>66</sup>. This connection, however, is obviously intended by the author and it remains whether the letter is authentically dated in 164/163 BCE or a forgery composed ca. 60 BCE<sup>67</sup>, as proposed Bickerman. In return, none of these datings lays down the historicity of the letter's testimony on Aristobulus; much on the contrary, according to Holladay:

If the early date is correct, the letter serves as contemporary testimony linking Aristobulus to the time of Judas Maccabaeus. If the later date is correct, the letter shows that Aristobulus's reputation as a highly regarded Alexandrian Jew was still intact after a hundred years. In neither case, especially the former, should we imagine that Aristobulus is a fictive addressee nor that he is wrongly situated. Addressing such a letter to a historical figure appropriately dated would seem to be the minimal requirement for credibility.<sup>68</sup>

Therefore, as the historian argues, "this slender portrait in II Macc 1:10", of a reputed Jewish authority in Ptolemaic Egypt, "probably has a historical core, even if we entertain doubts about Aristobulus's priestly descent and his status as king Ptolemy's teacher"<sup>69</sup>. Nonetheless, for the present investigation, each of these alleged aspects of the Alexandrian philosopher mentioned in the epistle needs to be further examined in order to determine the veracity of the information provided and how literally should we take it.

In the letter's address above, one can distinguish three main aspects of Aristobulus that justify the choice of him as an official representant of the Egyptian Jews: first and simpler, for lacking evidence, his "priestly descent" (χριστῶν γένους); second and more complex, because of its implications, his office as "teacher of king Ptolemy" (διδασκάλῳ Πτολεμαίου τοῦ βασιλέως), likely with an authority role in the royal court.

*5.2.1. Aristobulus's priestly descent.* One might have noticed, at this point, that the fact that Aristobulus was "from a family of anointed priests (ἀπὸ τοῦ τῶν χριστῶν γένους), mentioned in II Macc 1:10, is not accounted anywhere else in the documents. Neither in Christian literature, whose references to Aristobulus were each extensively treated here, and obviously nor in pagan sources, which do not mention him at all, as almost two centuries of

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[GCS 15(52)], vol. 2, pp. 92.27-93.1); Eusebius *P.E.* 9.6.6 (Mras [GCS 43(1)], p. 493.9-10); Walter, op. cit. pp. 35-40; Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 46: "even though 'Ptolemy the king' is not further identified in the prescript, the informed reader is expected to think of Ptolemy IV Philometor (181-145 BCE).

<sup>66</sup> Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 46.

<sup>67</sup> As explained before, for most scholars, the references to Judah Maccabee and Aristobulus appear to be authentic, whether as accurate descriptions, if the document is authentic, or as intendedly historical forgeries, if a later falsification; cf. Bunge, op. cit., pp. 53-55; Habicht [JSHRZ 1.3], p. 202; Goldstein, [AB 41A], p. 545; C. L. W. Grimm, op. cit., pp. 36-7; and C. F. Keil, op. cit., pp. 270-1.

<sup>68</sup> Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 45.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

scholar researches have concluded, it is commented about the philosopher's priesthood. Holladay confirms, "his priestly status is not referred to again in the later tradition, [...] but neither it is contested"<sup>70</sup>.

The presumption of priestly descent in Judaism is more than a simple constatation about one's family, it is a rabbinic title of honour granted to a *kohen* (כהן), the Hebrew analog of a priest, who demonstrates exemplary behavior<sup>71</sup>. In traditional rabbinic sources, to a *kohen mukhzaq* (כהן מוחזק, "presumed *kohen*" or "status-quo *kohen*") is attributed equivalent position as if he was of direct patrilineal descent from the biblical Aaron, brother of Moses<sup>72</sup> – as the Levitical priests were believed and required to be, in agreement with God's blessing in Exodus 40:14-15<sup>73</sup>. Thus, although it looks like a family title, the Aaronids are not distinguished by their genealogical records, but by their priestly behaviour *de facto*, as determined by the laws of *Halakha* (הלכה)<sup>74</sup>.

It can be inferred from the previous usage of the term in the Septuagint that the translational counterpart of the Greek *χριστῶν* ("anointed") in Hebrew is *mashiakh* (משיח, "anointed" or "blessed"), commonly used to refer Aaronic priesthood<sup>75</sup>. Therefore, it is quite certain that the Palestinian, and thus Hebrew speaking author of II Macc 1:10 meant literally that Aristobulus was a *kohen mukhzaq* – which leaves us faced with a problem, since there are no records of his religious practices in general, let alone his priestly behaviour. Goldstein

70 Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 77.

71 The kind of priestly behavior expected from a presumed *kohen* ... On priestly descent, see Daniel R. Schwartz, "Priesthood and Priestly Descent: Josephus, 'Antiquities' 10.80" in *The Journal of Theological Studies*, New Series, vol. 32, n. 1 (apr., 1981), pp. 129-135.

72 See, for instance, Naphtali Ha-Kohen Katz, *From the Ethical Will*, ¶ 20 apud Avriel Bar-Levav, "Ritualizing Death and Dying: the Ethical Will of Naphtali Ha-kohen" in Lawrence Fine [ed.], *Judaism in Practice: From the Middle Ages Through the Early Modern Period* (Princeton: University Press, 2001), p. 165.

73 [NRSV] Exodus 40:14-15: "You shall bring his [Aaron's] sons also and put tunics on them, and anoint them, as you anointed their father, that they may serve me as priests: and their anointing shall admit them to a perpetual priesthood throughout all generations to come". Cf. Josephus, "Of the priesthood of Aaron", *Antiquitates Judaicae (A.J.)* 3:188-223 in St. J. Thackeray [transl.], Loeb Classical Library 242 [LCL 242] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930), pp. 406-22.

74 *Halakha* (הלכה, "the Way"), of the same root as the verbs "to walk" or "to behave" in Hebrew, is the collective body of rabbinic laws derived from the written and Oral Torah, which guides not only religious practices and beliefs, but also numerous aspects of day-to-day life. On *Halakha*, see Hillel Newman, *Proximity to Power and Jewish Sectarian Groups of the Ancient Period: a review of lifestyle, values, and Halakha in the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Qumran*, The Brill Reference Library of Judaism, vol. 25 [BRLJ 25] (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Aharon Lichtenstein, "The Human and Social Factor in Halakha" in *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought*, vol. 36, n. 1 (Spring, 2002), pp. 1-25.

75 Capponi, op. cit., p. 109, viz. note 3: "χριστός points out that the word is used with reference to priests in the LXX, Lev. 4.5.16, 6.22, and is often used to define the kings of Israel, cf. 1 Kings 2.4.7, Ps. 17 (18) 51, Is. 45.1 or the patriarchs, as in Ps. 104 (105) 15". See Albert Hogeterp, *Expectations of the End: A Comparative Traditio-Historical Study Eschatological, Apocalyptic and Messianic Ideas in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009), p. 436, viz. note 56.

notably identifies Aristobulus's effort of correctly calculating the date of Passover<sup>76</sup> and his speculations about the Sabbath<sup>77</sup> as thorough indications of priestly interests<sup>78</sup>.

Willrich, however, emphasizes the difficulty to square the information on Aristobulus with what we know about Onias IV<sup>79</sup>, a *ha-kohen* (high priest) of Jerusalem who fled to Egypt before the victory of Judah Maccabee and, about 154 BCE, built a temple in Leontopolis under the permission of Ptolemy VI Philometor<sup>80</sup>. The historian argues that saying that Aristobulus "belong to the family of the anointed priests [...] is to say, by other words, that he belongs to the high priest family of Onias, [...] beheld as the head of them"<sup>81</sup>.

If that is so, the big problem is that it was Aristobulus the one addressed by the Jews of Jerusalem instead of Onias himself: how could Aristobulus, though already a famous philosopher, recognized as Ptolemy's teacher, have been regarded as a bigger authority than Onias among the priestly Jews of Jerusalem? Willrich answers that "an Aaronid so inclined to Hellenism could actually have made a more brilliant career in Antiochus' realm; [and] to be a high priest in Jerusalem was in the end to be better than a teacher of Philometor in Jewish matters"<sup>82</sup>. Thus, with what we know of Onias' family and of the priestly prominents in the Egypt-Palestine area by that time, Aristobulus appears incompatible.

The reference to priestly descent tells us rather about the author of the letter, most-likely a compiler under Judah Maccabee and the senate's advisory, arguably a priest of Jerusalem as suggested Bickerman, although a century earlier than he proposed. The Maccabees themselves flourished in the second century BCE as an important "priestly family of Jews who organized a successful rebellion against the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV"<sup>83</sup> – the rabbinic atmosphere surrounds the whole biblical book. Starcky and Abel stand for this

76 Cf. Frg. 1 (Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 128-133)=Eusebius *H.E.* 7.32.14-19 (Schwartz [GCS 9(2)], pp. 722.28,724.1-724.6).

77 Cf. Frg. 5 (Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 176-197)=*P.E.* 13.12.9-16 (Mras [GCS 43.2], pp. 195-7).

78 Goldstein, [AB 41A], p. 168.

79 H. Willrich, *Juden und Griechen vor der makkabäischen Erhebung* (Göttingen : Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895), pp. 162-3.

80 Cf. Josephus, *A.J.* 13:62-73 in Ralph Marcus [transl.], Loeb Classical Library, n. 365 [LCL 365] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943), pp. 256-62. On Onias IV, see Richard Gottheil & Samuel Krauss, "Onias" in *Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1906). Consulted online on 20 November 2019 <<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/11710-onias>>; H. P. Chajes, "Onias" in *Beiträge zur Nordsemitischen Onomatologie*, Sitzungsberichte der phil.-hist. Classe der kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften 143/IV (Vienna: C. Gerald's Sohn, 1900), p. 23; E. Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1901-11), vol. 3, pp. 97-100.

81 Willrich, op. cit., p. 163.

82 Idem.

83 George A. F. Knight, "Maccabees: priestly Jewish family" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Consulted online on 21 November 2019 <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Maccabees>>. First published in: 1768.



position, suggesting that the letter may have been written by a priestly contemporary of Judah<sup>84</sup>. Thus, the mentioned aspect of Aristobulus is probably an assumption based on some of his then known ancestors, put forth in order to suit the interests of those involved.

5.2.2. *Aristobulus's office as Ptolemy's teacher.* The aspect of Aristobulus mentioned in II Macc 1:10 which most allows us to identify the figure addressed with the allegorical philosopher testified by Eusebius and Clement is that he was "teacher of king Ptolemy" (διδασκάλω Πτολεμαίου τοῦ βασιλέως). According to Momigliano, the account is either a misunderstanding or "a rhetorical title attached to Aristoboulos because he dedicated his work to the king"<sup>85</sup>, as we have seen other authors suggest. As Wacholder explains, however, "scholars have challenged the validity of the honorific title"<sup>86</sup>, objecting that the Palestinian Jews who addressed Aristobulus would not make such a mistake. The author illustrates:

"how", they ask, "could a professing Jew, such as Aristobulus, have served as tutor of a xenophobic and antisemitic royal family?" The letter must be a fabrication since the Jews of Jerusalem would have known better than to address Aristobulus by a false title.<sup>87</sup>

Indeed, as an Egyptian family, the Ptolemies could be charged of sharing historical resentments and, "we might say, innate hostility to the Jews"<sup>88</sup>, which Philo recognizes in Egyptian folk. However, as stated above, recent studies<sup>89</sup>, even those who doubt the letter's authenticity, agree that "the reign of Philometor is, however, still the most likely period for a Jewish writer to dedicate his work to the [Ptolemaic] king"<sup>90</sup>. Plenty of evidence actually point out to the receptiveness in Alexandria with respect to the Jewish community in the mid-second century, notably Josephus but also Philo<sup>91</sup>, in spite of the escalating tensions towards

84 Abel & Starcky, op. cit., p. 29.

85 Momigliano, "The Second Book of Maccabees" in *Classical Philology*, vol. 70, n. 2 (Apr., 1975), pp. 81-88 apud Capponi, op. cit., p. 110.

86 Wacholder, op. cit., p. 93.

87 Idem.

88 Philo, *In Flaccum* 29 in F. H. Colson [ed.] Loeb Classical Library 363 [LCL 363] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941), p. 319.

89 Cf. Willrich, op. cit., p. 162; P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), vol. 1, p. 694 and vol. 2, pp. 963-965; M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Wipf & Stock Pub, 1974), pp. 106-107; J. M. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE – 117 CE)* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), pp. 445-446; R. Radice, *La filosofia di Aristobulo e suoi nessi con il "De mundo" attribuito ad Aristotele* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1995).

90 J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Livonia: Dove Booksellers, 2000), p. 187.

91 Josephus, *A.J.* 12:387-8 (Marcus [LCL 365], pp. 200-2) and *A.J.* 13:62-73 (Marcus [LCL 365], pp. 256-62) describe the friendship relation developed between Philometor and Onias IV. Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium* 141 in Colson [ed.] Loeb Classical Library 379 [LCL 379] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 71 and *In Flaccum* 62 (Colson [LCL 363], p. 337) suggest a tolerant relationship between Alexandrians and Jews under the Ptolemies.

the Jews in the city and the Maccabean conflict occurring in Seleucid domain. Specifically about Ptolemy IV Philometor, Josephus' *Against Apion* is very elucidative:

ὁ δὲ Φιλομήτωρ Πτολεμαῖος καὶ ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ Κλεοπάτρα τὴν βασιλείαν ὅλην τὴν ἑαυτῶν Ἰουδαίους ἐπίστευσαν, καὶ στρατηγοὶ πάσης τῆς δυνάμεως ἦσαν Ὀνίας καὶ Δοσίθεος Ἰουδαῖοι, ὧν Ἀπίων σκώπτει τὰ ὀνόματα, δέον τὰ ἔργα θαυμάζειν καὶ μὴ λοιδορεῖν, ἀλλὰ χάριν αὐτοῖς ἔχειν, ὅτι διέσωσαν τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν, ἧς ὡς πολίτης ἀντιποιεῖται. πολεμούντων γὰρ αὐτῶν τῇ βασιλίσση Κλεοπάτρᾳ καὶ κινδυνευόντων ἀπολέσθαι κακῶς οὗτοι συμβάσεις ἐποίησαν καὶ τῶν ἐμφυλίων κακῶν ἀπήλλαξαν.<sup>92</sup>

Again, Ptolemy Philometor and his consort Cleopatra entrusted the whole of their realm to Jews, and placed their entire army under the command of Jewish generals, Onias and Dositheus. Apion ridicules their names, when he ought rather to admire their achievements, and instead of abusing them, to thank them for saving Alexandria, of which he claims to be a citizen. For when the Alexandrians were at war with Queen Cleopatra and in imminent danger of annihilation, it was they who negotiated terms and rid them of the horrors of civil war.<sup>93</sup>

As one can see above, according to Josephus, not only were the Jews able to achieve command positions (e. g., στρατηγοὶ) but also had an open channel of negotiation with the court under the reign of Philometor, as many modern authors have also suggested<sup>94</sup>. Tcherikover argues that Josephus' account is of course an exaggeration, but provides numerous historical examples attesting Philometor's sympathy with the Jews: among others, a separate Jewish military unit was created and put under the command of Onias; this latter was permitted to settle his soldiers on the soil and to build a temple; Jews were admitted to the financial administration of the State, as tax-farmers and officials, in Upper Egypt<sup>95</sup>.

Philometor and his wife Cleopatra II, thus, although both Egyptian, had an outstandingly receptive posture in face of the thriving Jewish community of Alexandria and a close relationship with their main representants, sometimes closer than with the Alexandrians themselves – which is described by scholars as a "philo-Semitic" policy of these monarchs. Therefore, "something like a pact was concluded between Philometor and the Jews"<sup>96</sup>, as Tcherikover explains. Thus, when it comes to Aristobulus under such conditions, Holladay is very assertive: "in light of Philometor's favorable attitudes towards Jews, and the improved social standing that has occurred within Alexandrian Jewry by this time, an educated Jew of philosophical bent was not an unlikely possibility"<sup>97</sup>.

92 Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2.49 in Thackeray [transl.], Loeb Classical Library, n. 186 [LCL 186] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926), p. 312.

93 Ibid., p. 313.

94 See, for instance, Walter, op. cit., pp. 38-39; Fraser, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 83-84, 299-300, 695-696; Schürer, op. cit., vol. 3, pp. 131, 144-45; Tcherikover, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, vol. 1 [CPJ 1] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 20-21.

95 Tcherikover, *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, vol. 1 [CPJ 1] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 20.

96 Ibid., p. 21.

97 Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 71.

Indeed, his *Explanations of Moses' Scriptures* (ἐξηγήσεις τῆς Μωϋσέως γραφῆς), i. e., Frgs. 2-5, "have been written in the form of a dialogue between Aristobulus and Ptolemy, in which Aristobulus answers the king's questions. The philosopher appears to answer objective inquiries set before him directly by Philometor – much more than just a typical dedication, he seems to converse with the king in analogies and thought experiments. For instance, in the beginning of Frg. 2, on God's alleged anthropomorphisms, the philosopher writes:

Πλὴν ἰκανῶς εἰρημένων πρὸς τὰ προκείμενα ζκττήματα ἐπεφώνησας καὶ σύ, βασιλεῦ, διότι σημαίνεται διὰ τοῦ νόμον τοῦ παρ' ἡμῖν καὶ χεῖρες καὶ βραχίον καὶ πρόσωπον καὶ πόδες καὶ περίπατος ἐπὶ τῆς θείας δυνάμεως.<sup>98</sup>

However, after we had said enough in reply to the questions set before us, you also called out, Your Majesty, (asking) why throughout our Law hands, arm, visage, feet and ability to walk are used as signifiers for the divide power.<sup>99</sup>

Even so, regardless of the notable receptiveness of the period, skepticists raised doubts whether a Ptolemaic king would have been interested in the Law to the point of putting exegetical and philosophical question to a Jewish teacher. First of all, as Collins argues, "the fact that an author dedicated a work to the king does not necessarily require that the king ever read it"<sup>100</sup>. In this particular sense, an important feature to be regarded is Philometor's age by the time that Aristobulus's *Explanations* are likely to have been composed (about 176 BCE). According to Polybius' accounts<sup>101</sup>, Philometor was born around 186 BCE and came to the throne as a very young child, in 180, after the death of his father Ptolemy V Epiphanes, being the kingdom governed by regents<sup>102</sup> until he was considered of age in 169.

In face of this, Holladay concludes that

it is quite conceivable that Aristobulus, ca. 176-170, when Philometor was a sole ruler, yet still a young boy (10 years old), composed an exegetical work on the Bible dedicated to the young

98 Holladay [FrHJA 3], Frg. 2, p. 134 (Eusebius *P.E.* 8.9.38-10 in Mras [GCS 43(1)] 451.5-12).

99 Holladay [FrHJA 3], Frg. 2, p. 135.

100 Collins, op. cit., p. 187.

101 The evidence for dating Philometor is based on two statements in Polybius concerning his father's and his own crowning: Polybius 18.55.3 in W. R. Paton [transl.], Loeb Classical Library, n. 160 [LCL 160] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), p. 206-7; and Polybius 28.12.8 in Paton [transl.], Loeb Classical Library, n. 161 [LCL 161] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), p. 24-5. Polybius 18.55.3 remarks that Ptolemy V's *Anacleteria* (Ἀνακλητηρία), the festival usually celebrated upon kings' coming of age, held when he was 13, was not pressing at that time. No similar remark is made in Polybius 28.12.8, where another *ανακλητηρία* is reported to be celebrated in honour of King Ptolemy (assumed from context to be Ptolemy VI), in the date of 169 BCE (J. W. Rosse, v. s. "Phillipus, Q. Marcus" in *An Index of Dates: Comprehending the Principal Facts in the Chronology and History of the World* [London: Henry G. Bohn, 1854], p. 702). It is likely, thus, that Ptolemy VI was enthroned in early 169 at a normal age, around 16, having been born in about 186. See Walter Otto, *Zur Geschichte der Zeit des 6. Ptolemäers: Ein Beitrag zur Politik und zum Staatsrecht des Hellenismus* (München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1934), p. 7.

102 The kingdom was firstly runned by his mother, Cleopatra I, who governed as senior ruler until her death in 178/177, an then by the eunuchs Eulaios and Lennaios as regents, until 169. See Otto Mørkholm, "Eulaios and Lennaios" in *Class. et Med.*, n. 22 (1961), pp. 32-43.

king. Since it was a literary commonplace to address literary works to the reigning sovereign, Aristobulus could have done so quite credibly, without thinking for a moment that the work would actually be read by the sovereign. Yet, in doing so, he could quite plausibly consider himself "instructing" the king, especially since the latter was a young boy; or, if he did not self-consciously do so, others could plausibly so construe his work.<sup>103</sup>

Thus, although Aristobulus does use the reference to Ptolemy as a literary resource, considerable recurrent in Hellenistic literature, the possibility of him having actually expected the work to be read is not at all unlikely, especially in face of his likely high social standing in this particular context. Rather than made by Philometor himself, though, the questions that Aristobulus answers are possibly taken from anti-Jewish polemics put forth by his Alexandrian counterparts, whose opinions he would seek, in the best case scenario, to prevent the young king to be compelled to. And indeed, to judge by the degree of interaction that Jews were able to achieve in the court by the succeeding period, with the clear example of Onias, who became friends with Philometor, it is not unlikely that a high-class Jew actually had an official role in it as the king's tutor. By influence of the philosopher as an early mentor or not, the goal of raising Philometor as a receptive monarch appears to be successfully accomplished after all, considering his clear "philo-Semitic" attitude throughout life.

Pioneer studies in Egyptian papyrology have demonstrated as well that Jews had significant social mobility, into administrative functions of State and other authority positions, during the whole Ptolemaic period. Based on a detained analysis of Jewish papyri from Alexandria, Tcherikover explains that "the representatives of the Jewish intelligentsia, for instance the [...] philosopher Aristoboulos, were admitted to the court and allowed to inform the king on matters connected with the Jewish faith"<sup>104</sup>. In support of this thesis, Livia Capponi has recently pointed out new evidence in Alexandrian papyri which might testify specifically to Aristobulus, arguing that, as far as the records go, the philosopher may indeed have had a place in the Ptolemaic court<sup>105</sup>.

Let us further explanate the features of Capponi's thesis:

First, as explained before<sup>106</sup>, in Frg. 1, Anatolius refers to Aristobulus as a teacher and cites him aside with two other men, both called Agathobulus, "the Masters" (ἀμφοτέρων Ἀγαθοβούλων, τον ἐπίκλην διδασκάλων Ἀριστοβούλου τοῦ πάνυ<sup>107</sup>). According to Capponi,

<sup>103</sup> Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 75.

<sup>104</sup> Tcherikover [CPJ 1], p. 20.

<sup>105</sup> The full work is Livia Capponi, "Aristoboulos and the Hieros Logos of the Egyptian Jews", Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth International Congress of Papyrology (Ann Arbor: American Studies in Papyrology, 2010), pp. 109-120.

<sup>106</sup> See Chapter III above, viz. note 21.

<sup>107</sup> Anatolius, Περὶ τοῦ πάσχα apud Eusebius *H.E.* 7.32.18 (Holladay [FrHJA 3], Frg. 1, p. 130-1).

the job of royal teacher must have been an official court office, with precise rules, duties and records. Thus, she tries to sort out evidence in Ptolemaic papyri for some Agathobulus preceding our philosopher as king's tutor. Capponi shows that there are some attestations of the name Agathobulus in the papyri picturing an important man called Agathoboulos who lived at the court of Ptolemy IV Philopator<sup>108</sup>, during the last decade of the third century BCE.

The papyrologist argues that "this information lends support to the hypothesis that Aristoboulos was the successor of Agathoboulos as the king's official teacher of philosophy"<sup>109</sup>, having served later as Philometor's tutor, as Tcherikover proposes. This scenario, in which Aristobulus had actually worked in Ptolemy's court among the king's closest circles, even before Philometor, certainly adds a lot to his authority as late as 163 BCE. It is arguable that such a hypothesis, on its own, would allow Aristobulus to be referred as a representant of the Egyptian Jews by the people of Jerusalem.

If Aristobulus actually succeeded Philopator's master in the office of royal teacher, this would mean that we should assign him to an early dating in our rangings, much before Onias, who was argued to be a bigger authority in the stock of Egyptian Jews to be mentioned in II Maccabees, as explained above. In this interpretation, Aristobulus would have had a solid career in Ptolemaic Alexandria from as early as the beginning of the second century onwards, earlier than 180 BCE. This early dating also lays down the aforementioned concerns about the philosopher being mentioned instead of Onias IV in II Maccabees<sup>110</sup>, since the former would be an authority in court much before the latter became friends with Philometor and founded his temple in Egypt, as Josephus testifies<sup>111</sup>.

Secondly, Capponi argues that, in the Ptolemaic period, the royal tutor was often also head of the Great Library or played a role in the Museion, institutions responsible for keeping the civic records of Alexandria. Moreover, Anatolius's missinformed testimony on Aristobulus, as we have seen above<sup>112</sup>, also related the philosopher with the Library, mentioning him among the seventy sages who translated the Septuagint. For this matter, she once again recurs to evidence found in the papyrology, namely, a list of directors in the

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108 Among the papyri, *P. Stras.* 8.789, v. 2.6 is a historical account on Agathobulus' land in the administrative archive of Theadelphia, c. 160 CE; *P. Tebt.* 3.2.867, v. 31 is a bank record containing Agathobulus' name in the third century BCE; *Syll<sup>B</sup>* 79.3 (3 BCE) is an inscription from Cnidos, from a statue dedicated by the Alexandrian Agathoboulos son of Neon, to Sosibios son of Dioskourides, a prominent man under Philopator.

109 Capponi, *op. cit.*, p. 111, viz. note 11.

110 See §5.2.1 above; cf. Willrich, *op. cit.*, pp. 162-3.

111 Cf. Josephus, *A.J.* 13:62-73 (Marcus [LCL 365], pp. 254-62) Josephus, *A.J.* 3:188-223 (Thackeray [LCL 242], pp. 406-22).

112 Cf. §2.2.2; 3.1.2.

Alexandrian library<sup>113</sup>, searching for mentions to Aristobulus in these records. The author explains that

our list of Alexandrian librarians on papyrus has a gap in the reign of Philometor, between Apollonios Eidographos (ca. 196 to 175 BC) and Aristarchos of Samothrace (from 165 BC), so there might be room for Aristoboulos, although there is no precedent for a Jewish chief-librarian (he may have been erased from the official list for being a Jew).<sup>114</sup>

Thus, aside of Anatolius's mistaken account, there is actually no evidence associating directly Aristobulus to the Library, however, based on this blank space in this official list of chief-librarians, Capponi seeks for references to the philosopher in papyri from the Egyptian court. She primarily provides three possible instances: in *P. Cair. Zen.* 1.59037, of 258/257 BCE, a prominent man at Alexandria called Aristobulus as early as the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphos, obviously too early to be our Aristobulus; in *P. Tebt.* 3.1.821.5, of 17 June 209 BCE, an Aristobulus supervising garrisons in the Thebaid and at Coptos, notably guided by a Jewish called Dositheos; and, finally in a group of similar themed documents, appears an Alexandrian official called Aristobulus who signed payments to soldiers and scribes and was involved in tax collection<sup>115</sup>.

To the papyrologist, "none of these documents seem really compatible with the Jewish Aristoboulos"<sup>116</sup>, although this author would not be certain about the last ones. Anyways, Capponi proceeds to concentrate her argumentation mostly in another instance in the papyri which not only might satisfy our philosopher's dating, but remarkably refers to a matter treated in one of Aristobulus's fragments. As Capponi notes, there is a curious coincidence between Aristobulus's decision to adapt the Orphic hieros logos (Ἱερὸν Λόγον, "sacred legend", "holy word") to Jewish theology and the mention of an Aristobulus checking hieroi logoi of Dionysiac priests on a royal edict of an unidentified Ptolemy (BGU 6.1211). The reconstructed papyrus reads as follows:

βασ[ιλ]έως προστάξαντο[ς].  
 τοὺς κατὰ τὴν χώραν τελούντα[ς]  
 τῷ Διονύσῳ καταπλεῖν εἰς Ἀλε[ξ]άν-  
 δρειαν, τοὺς μὲν ἕως Ναυκράτεω[ς] ἀ-  
 φ' ἧς ἡμέρας τὸ πρόσταγμα ἔκκειται  
 ἐν ἡμέραις ι, τοὺς δὲ ἐπάνω Ναυκράτε-  
 ως ἐν ἡμέραις κ καὶ ἀπογράφεσθ[αι] πρὸς  
 Ἀριστόβουλον εἰς τὸ καταλογεῖον [ἀ]φ' ἧ[ς]

113 Cf. *P. Oxy.* 6.1241=*Pack*<sup>2</sup> 2069.

114 Capponi, op. cit., p. 111; viz. note 13: the list features Aristophanes of Byzantium (204-201 to 189-186 BC); after whom we read "and Aristarchos," but the way in which it is added suggests an interpolation, and the right sequence should be Aristophanes of Byzantium from ca. 204 to 189-186 BC .

115 These three instances are presented in Capponi, op. cit., pp. 112-13.

116 Ibid., p. 113.

ἂν ἡμέρας παραγένωνται ἐν ἡμ[έρ]αις  
 τρ[ι]σίν , διασαφεῖν δὲ εὐθέως καὶ π[αρὰ τί-]  
 νων παρελήφασι τὰ ἱερὰ ἕως γενε[ῶν τρι-]  
 ῶν καὶ διδόναι τὸν ἱερὸν λόγον ἐ[σφ]ραγισ[μένον]  
 ἐπιγράψαντα ἄ τὸ ὄνομα ἕκαστ[ον] τὸ αὐ[το]ῦ  
 ὄνομα.<sup>117</sup>

By decree of the king. Persons who perform the rite of Dionysos in the country shall sail down within 10 days from the day on which the decree is published and those beyond Naukratis within 20 days, and shall register themselves before Aristoboulos at the registration-office within three days from the day on which they arrive, and shall declare forthwith from what persons they have received the transmission of the sacred rites for three generations back and shall hand in the sacred book sealed up, each inscribing thereon his own name.<sup>118</sup>

The actual date of the royal edict is unclear. It has been written across the fibres on the back of a papyrus roll, preserving on the front another document, a loan explicitly dated in 215/214 BCE<sup>119</sup>, having traditionally been assigned on that behalf to 215 BCE. The academic consensus, however, is that it took place actually *after* this date, most scholars pointing out for the reign of Ptolemy IV Philopator – which may not be at all incompatible with our philosopher, as we suggested above. But, as Capponi argues, if we consider that "in Ptolemaic and Roman public documents the most common interval between the writing on the front and the writing on the back (that is, between recto and verso) is between 50 and 100 years"<sup>120</sup>, it could be correctly hypothesized that the edict was issued between 165 and 115 BCE.

In Capponi's interpretation, thus, "the census of Dionysiac worshippers to which *BGU* 6.1211 refers probably belongs to the age of Philometor and Aristoboulos (181–145 BCE), and perhaps, to a date around 165 BCE"<sup>121</sup>. If one is to accept such a dating for the edict and concede that it actually refers to Aristobulus, this would mean that the philosopher was indeed a Jewish official in the Ptolemaic court's registration-office, charged of receiving census records of "persons who perform the rite of Dionysos".

For the papyrologist, Aristobulus would be taking efforts (like later, Philo) to shore up the faith of the Jews of Alexandria, who faced the temptation of apostasy, as we will see ahead, and often embraced the cult of Dionysos – which would explain his arguments in *Frg.* 4 that the Orphic-Dionysiac *hieros logos* was an adaptation of the Jewish cosmology. Furthermore, not only Capponi, but also Tcherikover before and many authors in his succession have argued that papyrological evidence enables that "Aristobulus might have served as

117 *BGU* 6.1211.11–14=*C.Ord.Ptol.* 29=*SB* 3.7266=*Sel.Pap.* 2.208 apud Capponi, op. cit., 114.

118 Capponi, op. cit., 114.

119 Idem; cf. *BGU* 6.1277.

120 Capponi, op. cit., p. 114. The papyrologist recognizes, though, that "obviously this is a rule of thumb (albeit taken from a range of documents), and there are exceptions" (idem).

121 Capponi, op. cit., p. 120.

Philometor's adviser for Jewish affairs is plausible, considering the extent of his interaction with Jewish constituencies during his reign"<sup>122</sup>.

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As we see, under the light of II Maccabees and its large modern criticism, not only the social character of Aristobulus becomes a lot clearer, but it also connects with a whole historical context, quite familiar to Jewish history. Regardless of the authenticity of the introductory letter preserved in II Macc 1:10-2:18, its address (II Macc 1:10) is consensually understood as a historically reliable testimony of the Alexandrian Jewish philosopher. In effect, with this pivotal chapter of our discussion, we were able to successfully link the two parts of our hypothesis about Aristobulus's historical character: the Jewish allegorical philosopher of Alexandria and the Jewish teacher of king Ptolemy addressed in II Maccabees. To the author, it remains no doubt that, in both testimonies, we are faced with the same historically accurate person.

We left the part of the letter addressed to Aristobulus regarded as a later forgery by Momigliano (II Macc 1:18b-2:16) aside of this primary discussion about the philosopher's testimony, since the latter does not depend on the former. Actually, after the initial salutation, nothing in the letter seems to refer directly to Aristobulus; however, if we regard it as authentic, along with some other historical accounts in the books of Maccabees and later sources about the period, such as Josephus and Philo, it would be possible to further elucidate his context of production.

But before we can venture into such investigations, we should first concentrate more specifically on Aristobulus's fragments themselves, in order to approach the context by the source, and not the other way around, once again following our inductive method. Since we now have a clear picture of who the Jewish philosopher was, it remains the task of addressing his work and how it converses with his social setting. Thus, as we finally proceed to the next and last chapter of this discussion, so we can complete our historical study on Aristobulus, a contextualized critical analysis of his fragments, i. e., understanding text and context not isolated, but in correlation, is most needed.

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122 Tcherikover [CPJ 1], p. 20-1 apud Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 71. See also Walter, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-39; Capponi, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-120.



## CHAPTER VI

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### THE FRAGMENTS AND THEIR CONTEXT OF PRODUCTION

Throughout this work, in all previous source analyses, one central theoretical and methodological guideline has been used, but in the strive for objectiveness, it was omitted from our discussions until this point, hopefully with no loss to the reader's comprehension. Now that we have finally reached our main primary source, the fragments of Aristobulus *per se*, it is convenient that we expose such a theoretical framework, in order to justify our method of approaching them.

#### 6. Critical analysis of the source

To be explicit, we are loosely based in the principles of a critical discourse analysis (CDA), as proposes Van Dijk<sup>1</sup>. Generally speaking, the method of CDA consists in interpreting the source "from a discourse analytical and sociopolitical point of view, [... looking forward] to study the relations between discourse structures and power structures"<sup>2</sup>, that is, between micro and macro, text and context. We may take this theoretical background with some reservation – the present author radically rejects the notion of "structure" understood in a broad sense, neither as formulated by Marx and the marxist sociology nor as proposed by Levi-Strauss and the cultural anthropology<sup>3</sup>.

However, especially concerned with matters such as social inequality, assimilation and resistance, we benefit a lot from such a critical method, as long as it is regarded as partial and incomplete – just as any general principle in History should be. As we understand it here, CDA intends to comprehend the historical connection between society, discourse and social cognition, focusing on power processes, such as hegemony and dominance, as well as on cultural sensibilities like ethnic relations and prejudice<sup>4</sup>. The main point to be taken into

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1 See Teun A. van Dijk, "Principles of critical discourse analysis" in *Discourse & Society*, vol. 4, n. 2 (1993), pp. 249-83.

2 Ibid., p. 250.

3 Although based on structural analysis, Van Dijk's propositions are not limited to such a framework. Along with the traditional Marx and more recent (neo-)marxists such as Adorno and Horkheimer, he also mentions more innovative theorists, notably Stuart Hall and Michel Foucault; cf. *ibid.*, p. 251. The reader must not take our use of CDA as methodological tool as a sign of filiation to any of these scholars, but rather simply as a borrowed and reinterpreted feature.

4 Ibid., p. 250. Another loose borrow from marxists, very important to our analysis, is Gramsci's understanding of hegemony and his theory of power in general; see B. Fontana, "Logos and Kratos: Gramsci

consideration here is that, in a critical discourse analysis, as Dijk explains, "although often dealing with 'language', 'text' or 'discourse' in many (usually rather philosophical) ways, most of the work does not explicitly and systematically deal with discourse structures"<sup>5</sup>.

This methodological choice, thus, implies that our aim in this investigation, as we proceed to Aristobulus's fragments, is not to subject his theological arguments to detained textual and linguistic scrutiny, providing a sophisticated philological discussion on the source – such a task was already magistrally accomplished by previous authors<sup>6</sup>. Our aim here, which is precisely the novelty of this research, is to address the fragments expressly as they relate to Aristobulus's sociopolitical setting, endeavoring to provide a contextualized and, thus, properly historiographical elucidation of our object.

**6.1. *The fragments of Aristobulus.*** Inspired in the principles of CDA, the following analysis is ultimately concerned not with the source itself, but with how it may help enlighten the historical context under which it came to light, seeking to approach context through text, and macro through micro – in accordance with the inductive method that we chose to begin with. Let us further analyze each of Aristobulus's five fragments, treating their argumentation in correspondance with his social conditions, seeking to resume them in a suitable hypothesis. For conciseness, however, we will not quote all writings in their full extent, but rather those passages that better elucidate the historical features of the source<sup>7</sup>.

**6.1.1. *Fragment 1: the date of Passover.*** As explained above, preserved firstly in Anatolius's *Paschal Canons* and then in Eusebius's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, the first fragment of appears to be taken from a very objective treatise. Based on astrological and geometrical knowledge, Aristobulus discusses the appropriate date for the feast of Passover to occur. As Collins explains, "his discussion of the Passover makes no reference to Jewish history but only to cosmic phenomena"<sup>8</sup> related to the celebration. For that reason, among his preserved writings, Frg. 1 is the least elucidating to our investigation, and the only one that clearly does not fit with the others into a single coherent work.

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and the Ancients on Hegemony" in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 61, n. 2 (Apr., 2000), pp. 305-326.

5 Van Dijk, op. cit., p. 251.

6 See Carl R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, vol. 3: *Aristobulus* [FrHJA 3] (Atlanta: Scholar Press, 1995); Adela Y. Collins, "Supplement: fragments of lost Judeo-Hellenistic works" in J. H. Charlesworth [ed.] *The Old Testament Pseudepigraphy*, vol. 2 [OTP 2] (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1985).

7 Our selection, however, covers all Aristobulus's central arguments and most of the full redactions.

8 J. J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Livonia: Dove Booksellers, 2000), p. 189.

The fragment is also the only one to quote Aristobulus solely indirectly and, for the most of its extent, rather generally, along with other Jewish authors, e. g., "this is known from what was said by Philo, Josephus, Musaeus [...] and the renowned teacher Aristobulus"<sup>9</sup>. The only passage expressly attributed to Aristobulus in the whole fragment, likely from some of the philosopher's long-perished works which we are unaware of, reads as follows:

Frg. 1: [...] ὁ δὲ Ἀριστόβουλος προστίθησιν ὡς εἶη ἐξ ἀνάγκης τῆ τῶν διαβατηρίων ἑορτῇ μὴ μόνον τὸν ἥλιον ἰσημερινὸν διαπορεύεσθαι τμημα, καὶ τὴν σελήνην δέ. τῶν γὰρ ἰσημερινῶν τμημάτων ὄντων δύο, τοῦ μὲν ἑαρινοῦ, τοῦ δὲ μετοπωρινοῦ, καὶ διαμετρούντων ἄλληλα δοθείσης τε τῆς τῶν διαβατηρίων ἡμέρας τῆ τεσσαρεσκαίδεκάτη τοῦ μηνὸς μεθ' ἐσπέραν, ἐνστήξεται μὲν ἡ σελήνη τὴν ἐναντίαν καὶ διάμετρον τῷ ἡλίῳ στάσιν, ὥσπερ οὖν ἔξεστιν ἐν ταῖς πανσελήνοις ὄραν, ἔσσονται δὲ ὁ μὲν κατὰ τὸ φθινοπωρινὸν ἰσημερινόν, ἡ σελήνη.<sup>10</sup>

Frg. 1: [...] But Aristobulus adds that, at the time of the feast of Passover, of necessity this would be [to sacrifice] when not only the sun is passing through an equinoctial sector, but the moon as well. For, since there are two equinoctial sectors, the vernal and the autumnal, and since they diametrically oppose each other, and since the day of Passover has been assigned to the fourteenth of the month after evening, the moon will take a position diametrically opposite the sun, just as one is thus permitted to see it at times of full moon; and the one, the sun, will be in the sector of the vernal equinox, while the other, the moon, will of necessity be in the sector of the autumnal equinox.<sup>11</sup>

As one can infer, the excerpt is merely an astronomical theorization taken out of context and put forth, likely in other words, as a support for Anatolius's own argumentation, in which the rest of the text consists, along with his testimony on the Jewish philosopher. Since Anatolius's testimony was extensively treated above<sup>12</sup> and his late discussion does not concern us, we are allowed now to concentrate exclusively in the quote above. Aristobulus's argument, however, is not quite clear from such a short extract of the original thesis. In general, it appears that the philosopher defends sacrificing for Passover (διαβατηρίων) in both spring and autumn equinox (ἰσημερινῶν τμημάτων ὄντων δύο, τοῦ μὲν ἑαρινοῦ, τοῦ δὲ μετοπωρινοῦ), since at both periods the sun and the moon are equivalently in diametrically opposed (διάμετρον) in the sky.

Although the Judeo-Hellenistic astronomical knowledge is undoubtedly a relevant and little known object to which this source might be very important<sup>13</sup>, to our investigation, the argument *per se* is not of interest. Nevertheless, both the theme and the theoretical approach

9 μαθρεῖν δ' ἔστιν ἐκ τῶν ὑπὸ Φίλωνος Ἰωσήπου Μουσαίου λεγομένων, καὶ [...] διδασκάλων Ἀριστοβούλου τοῦ πάνυ (Holladay [FrHJA 3], Frg. 1, p. 130, viz. ¶16)=Eusebius *H.E.* 7.32.16 (Schwartz [GCS 9(2)], p. 723). Cf. also *ibid.*, viz. ¶17=Eusebius *H.E.* 7.32.17: "when these explain the questions relating to the Book of Exodus..." (οὗτου τὰ ζητούμενα κατὰ τὴν Ἔξοδον ἐπιλύοντες ...) referring to the same authors.

10 Aristobulus, *Frg. 1* (Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 130, 132)=Eusebius *H.E.* 7.32.17-18 (Schwartz [GCS 9(2)], pp. 722-724).

11 Aristobulus, *Frg. 1* [transl.] (Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 131, 133).

12 Cf. §3.1.2 above.

13 Such a study is left as an idea for future efforts of research.

of the fragment reveal some important features of Aristobulus's mindset and educational background. As argued above, Goldstein has identified Aristobulus's efforts for precisely dating the Passover as an instance of priestly interest, which attests for the testimony of II Maccabees that he was from a family of anointed priests<sup>14</sup>.

Moreover, the philosopher's use of undeniably Greek geometrical rethorics is largely evidenced in this fragment, as well as ample knowledge of Greek astronomical concepts<sup>15</sup>, which indicates that he likely attended to formal Greek education in Alexandria<sup>16</sup>. In this sense, Frg. 1 does share a common aspect with the other writings of Aristobulus: it employs the same literary strategy of using the Greek philosophical framework to explain, justify and even reinterpret Jewish beliefs. This is particularly clear in the excerpt above, since the philosopher edges as far as to propose a modification on Jewish traditions concerning Passover based on plainly physical constatations, observing the theological matter under a typically Greek rational empiricism.

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The various descriptions of Aristobulus's work within the tradition, as discussed in the previous chapters of this investigation, confirm what we pointed out above: the next four fragments, all preserved in Eusebius's *Praeparatio Evangelica*, are parts of the same work. This work, likely a thick multi-volume treatise addressed to king Ptolemy VI Philometor – regarded here for convenience as *Explanations of Moses' Law* –, consisted of exegetical commentaries on the Torah, focusing mainly on Genesis, Exodus and, to some extent, Deuteronomy. However, "whether the work was a verse-by-verse commentary on the biblical text or more a thematic treatment of the Mosaic law is not certain<sup>17</sup>", as explains Holladay.

*6.1.2. Fragment 2: God's alleged anthropomorphisms.* The first direct quotation of Aristobulus to be presented in Eusebius's works, the second fragment is a thorough philosophical discussion on the mentions of God's limbs in the Law of Moses and their adequate interpretation in the philosopher's understanding. After Eusebius's foreword

14 Goldstein, [AB 41A], p. 168; cf. II Maccabees 1:10b.

15 Aristobulus shows to have great domain of Greek pre-scientific vocabulary. Notably, however, the passage appears to refer a geocentric model with a moving sun and moon, as described in ancient Talmudic astronomy, rather than the Aristotelian geocentric model with heavenly bodies attached to crystalline aether spheres in circular motion, which lays down his alleged Peripatetic filiation; on Hellenistic Jewish astronomy, cf. Alexander Toepel, "Yonton Revisited: A Case Study in the Reception of Hellenistic Science within Early Judaism" in *The Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 99, n. 3 (Jul., 2006), pp. 235-245.

16 The matter of Jewish education in Ptolemaic Alexandria will be carefully examined ahead; cf. §6.2.1 below.

17 Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 74.

describing Aristobulus, which was extensively treated before along with the Christian's testimony<sup>18</sup>, the fragment starts as a conversation with king Ptolemy who had, in advance, put a question about the references to anthropomorphisms in the Bible. The initial part of this long and very elucidating excerpt, where Aristobulus presents his argumentation, is:

Frg. 2: [...] Πλὴν ἰκανῶς εἰρημένων πρὸς τὰ προκείμενα ζητήματα ἐπεφώνησας καὶ σὺ, βασιλεῦ, διότι σημαίνεται διὰ τοῦ νόμου τοῦ παρ' ἡμῖν καὶ χεῖρες καὶ βραχίων καὶ πρόσωπον καὶ πόδες καὶ περίπατος ἐπὶ τῆς θείας δυνάμεως· ἃ τεύξεται λόγου καθήκοντος καὶ οὐκ ἀντιδοξήσει τοῖς προειρημένοις ὑφ' ἡμῶν οὐδέν. παρακαλέσαι δέ σε βούλομαι πρὸς τὸ φυσικῶς λαμβάνειν τὰς ἐκδοχὰς καὶ τὴν ἀρμόζουσαν ἔννοιαν περὶ θεοῦ κρατεῖν, καὶ μὴ ἐκπίπτειν εἰς τὸ μυθῶδες καὶ ἀνθρώπινον κατάστημα. πολλαχῶς γὰρ ὃ βούλεται λέγειν ὁ νομοθέτης ἡμῶν Μωσῆς ἐφ' ἐτέρων πραγμάτων κατασκευάς. οἷς μὲν οὖν ἀρέσσι τὸ καλῶς νοεῖν, θαυμάζουσι τὴν περὶ αὐτὸν σοφίαν καὶ τὸ θεῖον πνεῦμα, καθ' ὃ καὶ προφήτης ἀνακεκήρυκται· [...] τοῖς δὲ μὴ μετέχουσι δυνάμεως καὶ συνέσεως, ἀλλὰ τῷ γραπτῷ μόνον προσκειμένοις οὐ φαίνεται μεγαλιόν τι διασαφῶν. ἄρξομαι δὲ λαμβάνειν καθ' ἕκαστον σημαινόμενον, καθ' ὅσον ἂν ᾧ δυνατός.<sup>19</sup>

Frg. 2: [...] However, after we had said enough in reply to the questions set before us, you also called out, Your Majesty, (asking) why throughout our Law hands, arm, visage, feet, and ability to walk are used as signifiers for the divine power. Now these passages will find a proper explanation and will not contradict in any way what we said before. I want to urge you to accept the interpretations in their "natural" sense and grasp a fitting conception about God, and not lapse into a mythical, popular way of thinking. For what our lawgiver Moses wishes to say, he does so at many levels, using words that appear to have other referents (I mean, to things that can be seen); yet in doing so he actually speaks about "natural" conditions and structures of a higher order. Consequently, those who have keen intellectual powers are amazed at his wisdom and inspired spirit, in virtue of which he has also been proclaimed a prophet. [...] But to those who do not share in this power of comprehension, but cling to the letter only, he does not appear to convey anything in an expanded sense. So I will begin to take up in order each thing signified, insofar as I can.<sup>20</sup>

First of all, from this passage it is very clear that the Jewish philosopher not only dedicates his work to Ptolemy as a rhetorical resource, but rather writes explicitly in the form of a friendly dialogue with him. The choice of words enables us to distinguish two sources of inquiry: the king, who is presented in agreement with Aristobulus and seeking "a proper explanation" (λόγου καθήκοντος) of the Law; and "the questions set before them" (προκείμενα ζητήματα), presumably by non-Jewish criticists. The proximity portrayed between the transmitter and the receiver of the speech illustrates quite clearly the likelihood that Aristobulus had actually been the master of Philometor in his childhood and the *Explanations* was a tutorial on the Jewish Law made for the young monarch.

A Ptolemaic king or not, the interlocutor asks about the biblical references to God's limbs, as one can see above, wondering how such physical aspects could be used by Moses as representations of the divine power. The main argument to which Aristobulus recurs in answer

18 Cf. §3.1.3 above.

19 Aristobulus, *Frg. 2* (Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 134, 136)=Eusebius *P.E.* 8.10.1-6 (Mras [GCS 43(1)], p. 451-2).

20 Aristobulus, *Frg. 2* [transl.] (Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 135, 137).

to the interpellation is very clear above: the lawgiver speaks in "no pragmatical sense" (ἐτέρων πραγμάτων κατασκευάζ), demanding a more profound interpretation than that provided by the "mythical, popular way of thinking" (μυθῶδες καὶ ἀνθρώπινον κατάστημα). In Collins' brilliant reading, the philosopher critically argues that "Moses uses language of outward appearance to express inward realities"<sup>21</sup>, and thus, one should not take his words literally. The whole point of Aristobulus's allegorical interpretation, which sought to deprehend hidden meanings from the religious text, was to evade from such a disseminated literalism.

Indeed, not only among Greeks and Hellenized Gentiles with their physical rationalism, critics would have emerged concerning Aristobulus's vision of the Law from all sides. As Collins explains, the philosopher dealt with double opposition:

His criticism may, in part, be directed against Gentile critics, but his primary reference is surely the Jewish literalists, who were still a significant faction in the time of Philo. The issue between Aristobulus and the literalists was significant. If a religion is to function as any form of nomism, the meaning of the laws must be publicly accessible. The allegorical method shifts the basis of the religion from the actual text to the understanding which provides the hidden interpretation.<sup>22</sup>

He must have been harshly criticized within the Jewish community. It is not surprising that Aristobulus appears to respond the misunderstandings regarding the Law with certain degree of resentment: "but to those who do not share in this power of comprehension, but cling to the letter only, he does not appear to convey anything in an expanded sense". This concept of "expanded sense" (μεγαλεῖόν τι διασαφῶν) is quite elucidating of Aristobulus's allegorical interprise. As the philosopher proceeds, after the foreword quoted above, to treat some specific instances of divine limbs referred in the Bible, he recurs to the same concept, with different terms, over and over again:

διόπερ καλῶς ὁ νομοθέτης ἐπὶ τὸ μεγαλεῖον μετενήνοχε, λέγων τὰς συντελείας χεῖρας εἶναι θεοῦ. στάσις δὲ θεία καλῶς ἂν λέγοιτο κατὰ τὸ μεγαλεῖον ἢ τοῦ κόσμου κατασκευή.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, quite appropriately has the lawgiver spoken metaphorically in an expanded sense in saying that the accomplishments of God are his hands. And the divine "standing", understood in this expanded sense, might well be called the constitution of the cosmos.<sup>24</sup>

The dialogue does not edge a lot further in the preserved text. This "expanded sense" argued in this fragment illustrates quite well Aristobulus's main concern: "to show that Torah, properly (i.e., allegorically) understood, can be intelligible to educated Greeks"<sup>25</sup>, as Walter

21 J. Collins, op. cit., p. 189.

22 Idem.

23 Aristobulus, *Frg. 2* (Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 139, 141)=Eusebius *P.E.* 8.10.9 (Mras [GCS 43(1)], p. 452).

24 Aristobulus, *Frg. 2* [transl.] (Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 138, 140).

25 Walter, *Der Thoraausleger Aristobulos: Untersuchungen zu seinen Fragmenten und zu pseudepigraphischen Resten de der jüdisch-hellenistischen Literatur* (TU 86; Berlin: Akademie, 1964), pp. 27-28.

states. Notably, Aristobulus's allegorical method comes purely from his apologetic interests – Walter has remarked that the philosopher's lack of technical vocabulary indicates that he was a pioneer in this kind of Jewish exegesis<sup>26</sup>. As Collins rightly points out, however, "Aristobulus's use of allegorical interpretation is confined to the biblical anthropomorphisms – the hands, feet, "standing" and voice of God"<sup>27</sup>. The debate reappears in Frg. 4 addressing specifically this latter aspect<sup>28</sup>, but the method is not further used in the preserved work, although it is referenced in Frg. 5, concerning the nature of wisdom<sup>29</sup>.

6.1.3. *Fragment 3: the Greeks' dependence on the Law (1)*. The next two fragments have much similar contents, both of them "intended, at least in part, to show that Greek philosophers and poets like Pythagoras and Plato owed some debt to the Bible"<sup>30</sup>, as Holladay argues, a central feature of Aristobulus's philosophy. Very straightforward argumentations, Frg. 3 and 4 are both pretty self-evident in their propositions, carelessly asserting that these widely known classics had taken ideas from the Jewish Law. Thus, not much interpretation is going to be required from us since, as one will see, the passages that we select below are quite illustrative on their own. Frg. 3, for instance, the shortest among all fragments, could not be more direct – its major part is presented below:

Frg. 3: [...] Φανερόν ὅτι κατηκολούθησεν ὁ Πλάτων τῇ καθ' ἡμᾶς νομοθεσίᾳ, καὶ φανερός ἐστι περιειργασμένος ἕκαστα τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ. διηρμήνευται γὰρ πρὸ Δημητρίου τοῦ Φαληρέως δι' ἐτέρων, πρὸ τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ Περσῶν ἐπικρατήσεως, τὰ τε κατὰ τὴν ἐξαγωγήν τὴν ἐξ Αἰγύπτου τῶν Ἑβραίων, ἡμετέρων δὲ πολιτῶν, καὶ ἡ τῶν γεγονότων ἀπάντων αὐτοῖς ἐπιφάνεια καὶ κράτησις τῆς χώρας καὶ τῆς ὅλης νομοθεσίας ἐπεξήγησιν, ὡς εὐδηλον εἶναι τὸν προειρημένον φιλόσοφον εἰληφέναι πολλά· γέγονε γὰρ πολυμαθής, καθὼς καὶ Πυθγόρας πολλά τῶν παρ' ἡμῶν μετενέγκας εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ δογματοποιίαν κατεχώρισεν.<sup>31</sup>

Frg. 3: [...] It is clear that Plato followed the tradition of the law that we use and he is conspicuous for having worked through each of the details contained in it. For before Demetrius of Phalerum, before the dominion of Alexander and the Persians, others had translated accounts of the events surrounding the exodus from Egypt of the Hebrews, our

26 Ibid., p. 135.

27 J. Collins, op. cit., p. 189.

28 Aristobulus, *Frag. 4* (Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 163-4)=Eusebius *P.E.* 13.12.3 (Mras [GCS 43(2)], p. 191): "For it is necessary to understand the divine "voice" not in the sense of spoken language but in the sense of creative acts, just as Moses in our lawcode has said that the entire beginning of the world was accomplished through God's words. For invariably he says in each instance, 'And God spoke, and it came to be'" (Δεῖ γὰρ λαμβάνειν τὴν θεῖαν φωνὴν οὐ ῥητὸν λόγον, ἀλλ' ἔργων κατασκευάζ, καθὼς καὶ διὰ τῆς νομοθεσίας ἡμῶν ὅλην τὴν γένεσιν τοῦ κόσμου θεοῦ λόγους εἴρηκεν ὁ Μωσῆς συνεχῶς γὰρ φησιν ἐφ' ἐκάστου· 'καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς, καὶ ἐγένετο').

29 Aristobulus, *Frag. 5* (Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 178-9)=Eusebius *P.E.* 13.12.10 (Mras [GCS 43(2)], p. 195): "[...] the same thing could be said allegorically about wisdom" (μεταφέροιο δ' ἂν τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς σοφίας).

30 Holladay [FrHJA 3], p. 74.

31 Aristobulus, *Fragment 3* (Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 152, 154)=Eusebius *P.E.* 13.12.1-3 (Mras [GCS 43(2)], pp. 190-191).

countrymen, and the disclosure to them of all the things that had happened as well as their domination of the land, and the detailed account of the entire law, go that it is very clear that the aforementioned philosopher had taken over many ideas; for he was very learned, just as Pythagoras, having borrowed many of the things in our traditions, found room for them in his own doctrinal system.<sup>32</sup>

There is not much to be said about the text that it does not say itself and, moreover, Aristobulus's approach here requires no further explanation, so it remains to address the argument and its rhetorical support. The main point above appears to be showing the anteriority of Jewish traditions over two of the most renowned Greek thinkers, Plato and Pythagoras, who would have both incorporated many of them in their philosophy. In the Hellenistic context, there is an interesting relations between antiqueness and cultural validation: the claims for the title of the earliest people of mankind were incredibly usual non-Greek literature, coveted as an aspect of superiority<sup>33</sup>. According to Droge, the argument was a distinctive mark of native works during the period: "this advantage over the Greeks was something which many eastern peoples shared, or claimed to share, with the Jews"<sup>34</sup>.

Thus, Aristobulus's aim in alleging textual dependence of early Greek authors on the Law was clearly apologetic: a demonstration of the superiority of the Jewish culture over theirs. However, it also meant to concede comparable authority to them. Collins explains quite well the Jew's intentions within this particular double sense:

One of the ways in which Aristobulus makes his point about the superiority of Judaism is by claiming that Plato and the philosophers borrowed from Moses. [...] While the claim may seem ridiculously arrogant, it involved the recognition that truth was indeed to be found in the pagan writers; ultimately, in Philo, it meant that Moses could be interpreted in the light of Greek philosophy.<sup>35</sup>

Here, it is possible to observe an underlying feature in this fragment which is a lot recurrent throughout Aristobulus's work: the unity of all truth, i. e., the idea that "the god of the Jews and the god of Gentiles are one"<sup>36</sup>, as Collins concludes. Thus, Plato and Pythagoras would have, consciously or not, exposed principles of the Law in their works; but Aristobulus does not rely on that. In order to make his argument historically viable, aware that the

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32 Aristobulus, *Fragment 3* [transl.] (Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 153, 155).

33 Cf. Berossus, *Babylonian History* (S. M. Burstein [ed.], *The Babyloniaca of Berossus* [Malibu: Undena Publications, 1978]); Manetho, *Egyptian History* (W. G. Waddell [ed.], *The Loeb Classical Library*, n. 350 [LCL 350] [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940]) and Philo of Byblus, *Phoenician History* (H. W. Attridge & R. A. Oden, *Philo of Byblos: Phoenician History. Introduction, Critical Text, Translation, Notes*, Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series, vol. 9 [CBQMS 9] [Washington D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1981]).

34 Arthur Droge, "The Interpretation of History Of Culture in Jewish-Hellenistic Historiography" in *SBL* (1984) *Seminar Papers* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1984), p. 135.

35 J. Collins, op. cit., p. 189.

36 Idem.



translation of the Bible in Greek took place long after Plato, he even states that there were translated accounts of the biblical events before Demetrius of Phalerum, the responsible for the Septuagint. For that matter, by the way, after the excerpt quoted above, as Aristobulus proceeds to the final words of the preserved fragment, he provides an account on the composition of the LXX under Ptolemy II Philadelphus.

Although the philosopher's argumentation on the Greeks' textual dependence on Moses and the Torah looks coherent, and thus, it may seem very tempting to consider it reliable at first glimpse, the literary links he establishes are mostly historically inaccurate. "So far there is no evidence of any Greek translations [of the Bible] before the LXX"<sup>37</sup>, as Grabbe points out. Moreover, although the similarities of both themes and propositions are undeniable, there is also no indication of Plato's use of the Hebrew tradition, much less Pythagoras, but rather of the other way around<sup>38</sup>.

*6.1.4. Fragment 4: the Greeks' dependence on the Law (2).* The fourth fragment, as we said, shares some sort of unity with the previous one, since it also presents a straightforward analysis of alleged borrows of Greek authors from the Mosaic Law. Actually, Frg. 4 starts with the aforementioned allegorical discussion on the "voice" of God<sup>39</sup>, resuming the exposition of Frg. 2 about anthropomorphisms, and then proceeds to point out further dependencies between the classics and the Bible, complementing Frg. 3. The fragment number four, thus, presented right after the third in Eusebius's *Praeparatio*, appears to be at the same time a continuation of both the second and the third fragments, being a pivotal piece to join this puzzle together. The most critical passages are these:

Frg. 4: [...] δοκοῦσι δέ μοι περιειργασμένοι πάντα κατηκολουθηκέναι τούτῳ Πυθαγόρας τε καὶ Σωκράτης καὶ Πλάτων λέγοντες ἀκούειν φωνῆς θεοῦ, τὴν κατασκευὴν τῶν ὄλων συνθεωποῦντες ἀκριβῶς ὑπὸ θεοῦ γεγονυῖαν καὶ συνεχομένην ἀδιαλείπτως. ἔτι δὲ καὶ Ὀρφεὺς ἐν ποιήμασι τῶν κατὰ τὸν Ἱερὸν Λόγον αὐτῷ λεγομένων οὕτως ἐκτίθεται περὶ τοῦ διακρατεῖσθαι θεία δυνάμει τὰ πάντα καὶ γενητὰ ὑπάρχειν καὶ ἐπὶ πάντων εἶναι τὸν θεόν...<sup>40</sup>

[...]

πᾶσι γὰρ τοῖς φιλοσόφοις ὁμολογεῖται διότι δεῖ περὶ θεοῦ διαλήψεις ὁσίας ἔχειν, ὃ μάλιστα παρακελεύεται καλῶς ἢ καθ' ἡμᾶς αἴρεσις. ἢ δὲ τοῦ νόμου κατασκευὴ πᾶσα ταῦ καθ'

37 Lester L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*, vol. 2: *The Coming of the Greeks: The Early Hellenistic Period (335-175 BCE)* [HJSTP 1] (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), p. 264.

38 See, for instance, Russell Gmirkin, *Plato and the Creation of the Hebrew Bible* (New York, London: Routledge, 2016). On similarities, Gmirkin explains that "Plato's *Laws* provides the only example in antiquity of an ethical or national literature comparable to the Hebrew Bible" (p. 264); cf. also

39 Cf. §6.1.2, viz. note 23 above.

40 Aristobulus, *Fragment 4* (Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 162, 164)=Eusebius *P.E.* 13.12.3-4 (Mras [GCS 43(2)], p. 191).

ἡμας | περὶ εὐσεβείας τέτακται καὶ δικαιοσύνης καὶ ἐγκρατείας καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἀγαθῶν τῶν κατὰ ἀλήθειαν.<sup>41</sup>

Frg. 4: [...] Now since Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato investigated everything thoroughly, they seem to me to have followed him [Moses] in saying that they hear God's voice by reflecting on the cosmic order as something carefully created by God and permanently held together by him. Moreover, Orpheus, in verses taken from the collection of sayings attributed to him entitled "Concerning the Holy Word" also expounds in this way about everything being governed by the power of God, about the origin of what has come to be, and about God's being over everything...<sup>42</sup>

All philosophers agree that it is necessary to hold devout convictions about God, something which our school prescribes particularly well. And the whole structure of our law has been drawn up with concern for piety, justice, self-control, and other qualities that are truly good.<sup>43</sup>

As one can see above, we have selected two excerpts of Frg. 4. The first one is presented as the beginning, in a separate section, of a new discussion, after the conclusion of the epitome on God's limbs. The second one, for its turn, appears in the closure of this newly begun discussion, in the far end of the fragment. Between these excerpts, Aristobulus provides a long example of Greek literary dependence on the Bible, quoting numerous verses of a poem allegedly attributed to Orpheus and taken from his collection of sayings on the Holy Word (Ἱερὸν Λόγον), or "Sacred Law". As we have shown in the previous chapter, Livia Capponi associates Aristobulus's reference to the Orphic *hieros logos* ("sacred law"), here adapted to suit that of the Jews, with a mention of this term in the royal edict *BGU* 6.1211, which also testifies for an Aristobulus. In the papyrus, Aristobulus appears as a court officer responsible for receiving census records of the Dyonisiac *hieroi logoi*<sup>44</sup>.

We argued before, however, that the presence of this poem in Frg. 4 is also one of the major concerns against the authenticity of Aristobulus, since they appear with distinct redactions in Clement's and Eusebius's recensions, and in still another version, in Pseudo-Justin<sup>45</sup>. Since it is a rather long debate that does not concern us in detail, we will not further concentrate neither in this authenticity issue, which was extensively treated in modern scholarship, as seen above, nor in the Orphic verses themselves – suffice it to say, one last time, that the authenticity problem with the source is widely overcome.

Aristobulus's argument in the fragment, furthermore, is once again self-evident, most notably in the second excerpt. Collins briefly resumes his point: "Judaism is a 'philosophical

41 Aristobulus, *Fragment 4* (Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 174)=Eusebius *P.E.* 13.12.8 (Mras [GCS 43(2)], p. 191).

42 Aristobulus, *Fragment 4* [transl.] (Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 162, 164).

43 Aristobulus, *Fragment 4* [transl.] (Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 175).

44 Livia Capponi, "Aristoboulos and the Hieros Logos of the Egyptian Jews", *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth International Congress of Papyrology* (Ann Arbor: American Studies in Papyrology, 2010), pp. 113-120.

45 See §1.1, viz. note 14; §1.2, viz. note 32 above

school' (*hairesis*) among others, though it claims to be the preeminent one. [...] Judaism differs from the philosophical schools in degree. Judaism, in effect, is not a covenantal nomism, but a philosophy"<sup>46</sup>. Thus, Aristobulus provides a common ground for Greek and Jewish thought, which agree, as one can see above, on the necessity "to hold devout convictions about God" (περὶ θεοῦ διαλήψεις ὁσίας ἔχειν). Upon this common ground, for that matter, as the philosopher insists to emphasize, the Jews are in advantage, since their school prescribes the godly aspects with particular trueness.

6.1.5. *Fragment 5: the holiness of the Sabbath.* This last fragment shares many common features with the others taken from Aristobulus's *Explanation*. As in Frg. 3 and 4, the philosopher once more argues on dependencies of renowned Greek authors, this time, specifically the classical poets, notably Homer and Hesiod. The argumentation of Frg. 5 revolves in turn of the belief that the seventh day is holy, of which Aristobulus identifies references in Greek poetry, apparently in order to justify the Jewish observance to the Sabbath. In parallel, the fragment also addresses an important feature of Aristobulus's project of synthesis between Jewish and Greek tradition: the connection between light and wisdom, in which consists his view of the *Logos*.

Two very elucidating passages of the fragment are these:

Frg. 5: Ἐχομένως δ' ἐστὶν ὡς ὁ θεός, <ὄς> τὸν ὅλον κόσμον κατεσκευάκε, καὶ δέδωκεν ἀνάπαυσιν ἡμῖν, διὰ τὸ καόπαθου εἶναι πᾶσι τὴν βιοτήν, ἑβδόμην ἡμέραν, ἣ δὴ καὶ πρώτη φυσικῶς ἂν λέγοιτο φωτὸς γένεσις, ἐν ᾗ τὰ πάντα συνθεορεῖται. μεταφέροιο δ' ἂν τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς σοφίας· τὸ γὰρ πᾶν φῶς ἐστὶν ἐξ αὐτῆς, καὶ τινες εἰρήκασι τῶν ἐκ τῆς αἰπέσεως ὄντες <τῆς> ἐκ τοῦ Περιπάτου λαμπτήρος αὐτὴν ἔχειν τάξιν· ἀκολουθοῦντες γὰρ αὐτῇ συνεχῶς ἀτάραχοι καταστήσονται δι' ὅλου τοῦ βίου...

[...] διασεσάθηκε δ' ἡμῖν αὐτὴν ἔννομον ἕνεκεν σημείου τοῦ περὶ ἡμᾶς ἑβδόμου λόγου καθεστῶτος, ἐν ᾗ γινῶσιν ἔχομεν ἀνθρωπίνον καὶ θείων πραγμάτων. δι' ἑβδομάδων δὲ καὶ πᾶς ὁ κόσμος κυκλεῖται τῶν ζῳογονουμένων καὶ τῶν φουμένων ἀπάντων· τῷ δὲ σάββατον αὐτὴν προσαγορεύεσθαι διερμηνεύεται ἀνάπαυσις· τῷ δὲ σάββατον αὐτὴν προσαγορεύεσθαι διερμηνεύεται ἀνάπαυσις οὐσα. διασαφεῖ δὲ καὶ Ὅμηρος καὶ Ἡσίοδος, μετεπιληφότες ἐκ τῶν ἡμετέρων βιβλίων ἱερὰν εἶναι.<sup>47</sup>

Frg. 5: [...] Following on this is the fact that God, who made and furnished the whole universe, also gave us as a day of rest – because of the toilsome life everyone has – the seventh day, but which, in a deeper sense, might also be called first, that is, the beginning of light through which all things are seen together. And the same thing could be applied metaphorically to wisdom as well, for all light issues from it. And some members of the Peripatetic school have said that it occupies the position of a lamp; for, by following it continually, they will remain undisturbed their entire life...

[...] Our law code has clearly shown us that the seventh day is an inherent law of nature that serves as a symbol of the sevenfold principle established all around us through

46 J. Collins, op. cit., p. 189.

47 Aristobulus, *Fragment 5* (Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 176, 178, 184, 186, 188)=Eusebius *P.E.* 13.12.9-10, 12-13 (Mras [GCS 43(2)], p. 195)

which we have knowledge of things both human and divine. And indeed all the world comprising all animal and plant life as well revolves through periods of seven; but that the seventh day is called the Sabbath means that it is a day of rest. Homer and Hesiod, who took their information from our books, plainly show that the seventh day is holy.<sup>48</sup>

As one can see above, the discussions on the Sabbath and on the *Logos* are actually mixed with each other, which is understandable, since both things concern to the principle of all things according to the Jewish Law, as narrated in Genesis, to which Aristobulus appears to refer. The association between wisdom (σοφίας, *sophias*) and light (φωτὸς, *photòs*) in the Bible is clearly explained in the first excerpt above: if the beginning of light in the seventh day of God's creation is seen as the start of all known things, all light primarily issues from knowledge itself (πᾶν φῶς ἐστὶν ἐξ αὐτῆς [σοφίας]).

The apparent paradox is solved in the following excerpt, where Aristobulus postulates a "sevenfold principle established all around us through which we have knowledge of things both human and divine", which is equivalent to the Greek concept of *Logos*, remarkably after Plato. This particular comprehension of *Logos* is very relevant since it not only reconciles Jewish and Greek beliefs, but also links Aristobulus's philosophy with that of his successor Philo, who later develops this theological conception to its state of art – in Philo, *Logos* is allegorically identified with the angel of the Lord in the Scriptures<sup>49</sup>.

The idea of a "sevenfold principle" is followed by many examples, seemingly with the goal of showing the holiness of number seven by recurrence: "all the world comprising all animal and plant life as well revolves through periods of seven". Here again, the aforementioned defense of the unity of all truth comes to light, this time notably concerning the apparent behavior of nature (*phýsis*), a very Greek empiricism to a very Greek subject. That Aristobulus uses such a strategy to defend the Sabbath "is significant, since the Sabbath was one of the more peculiar Jewish institutions"<sup>50</sup>, probably an object of estrangement with the Gentiles that he sought to show them explainable in Hellenistic categories.

Moreover, Aristobulus proceeds to mention Homer and Hesiod as Greek sources regarding the seventh day as holy, alleging them to have borrowed it from Jewish books. In the following passages of Frg. 5 which, for the sake of concision, were not presented here, Aristobulus even dares to directly quote some verses of Homer, Hesiod and Linus<sup>51</sup>, which Collins conveniently verifies:

48 Aristobulus, *Fragment 5* [transl.] (Holladay [FrHJA 3], pp. 177, 179, 185, 187, 189)

49 Cf. Philo, *De Cherubim* 1-3 in Colson & Whitaker [eds.], Loeb Classical Library. n. 227 [LCL 227] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1929), pp. 8-87. Philo, *De Somniis* 1.228-39 in Colson & Whitaker [eds.], Loeb Classical Library. n. 275 [LCL 275] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934), pp. 416-23.

50 J. Collins, op. cit., p. 190.

Aristobulus cites a number of verses from Greek poets to support the idea that the seventh day is holy. Only one of these verses (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 770) is demonstrably authentic, although one of the Homeric verses may be based on an authentic verse, and another may have been part of the Homeric tradition of the time. The other verses are not necessarily Jewish in origin.<sup>52</sup>

Just as the case of Plato and Pythagoras, as we argued above, Hesiod and the authors responsible for Homer's epics cannot be historically demonstrated to have had access to Jewish literature, these latter specially for their earliness. According to the traditional documentary hypothesis for dating the Old Testament, the first books of the Bible were likely written in about 950/850 BCE, not earlier. The redaction of the Iliad and the Odyssey, although the poems had circulated before in oral tradition for centuries, is commonly accepted to have taken place in a similar date, while Hesiod is dated a hundred years later. The interval is too short to enable mutual influence and, moreover, the vast majority of the known biblical manuscripts is actually a lot later.

**6.2. The context of Aristobulus.** Since we now have a wide summarization of Aristobulus's arguments and a clear idea of his literary strategy, our investigation may proceed to the final and most daring questions of this study: to whom does the philosopher speak to? Why does he do so? Obviously, we are not talking about king Philometor, his interlocutor in four of the five fragments above. But rather, socially speaking, what motivates his philosophical approach? To what context does it respond to? Based on the textual analysis above and the previous external criticism on the source, our main hypothesis about Aristobulus' context, in the spirit of critical discourse analysis, is that his work was written in response to a scenario of social inequality in Ptolemaic Alexandria and sought to provide intellectual support for the Jewish subaltern claims in the city.

The way that we see, Aristobulus speaks to his non-Jewish counterparts, trying to explain the Jewish customs in the Hellenistic rhetorics in order to have the Jews equally included in civic institutions. At the same time, however, the philosopher urged to his own community, who harshly resisted apostasy, seeking to show them it was safe to assimilate. As far as we know at this point, Aristobulus possibly had to face, as the thoroughly Hellenized Jew he is, a lot of criticism among the Jews, as the polemics with the Jewish literalists in Frg.

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51 Linus is an obscure legendary figure, whose traditionally attributed work, *Peri physeos kosmou*, a poem of thirteen verses, is assigned to Callimachus by Clement; cf. idem; Walter, op. cit., pp. 156-165.

52 Collins, op. cit., pp. 189-90.

2 suggests. In order to demonstrate such propositions, let us carefully examine the specific social setting of Aristobulus in the light of recent historiography on it.

Generally speaking, we are talking about the Hellenistic Diaspora setting, as Collins describes, a large-scale Jewish migration movement towards the West which started as early as Alexander and grew steadily until the Roman period. The historian explains that "the Hellenistic Jews were not reluctant exiles. They were attracted by Hellenistic culture, eager to win the respect of the Greeks and to adapt to their ways"<sup>53</sup>. This description suits Aristobulus's philosophical efforts very well. Indeed, as Stroumsa points out, literary strategies as those of our philosopher, very characteristic of Hellenistic Jews,

allowed them not just to avoid a radical rejection of Greek *paideia* but to actually integrate it into the hermeneutics of the Scriptures: if the same God is the ultimate source of both the Bible and of the individual traditions of folklore and wisdom of each nation, there should be some sort of correspondence.<sup>54</sup>

In this sense, the basic problem in the Jewish Diaspora was how to maintain the Jewish identity in an environment dominated by Gentiles – and since the identity of any individual is built up in interaction with others and must be confirmed by them, the modification was actually inevitable<sup>55</sup>. More specifically in the multicultural and cosmopolite context of Egypt, in general, and Alexandria, in particular, by this time, the "juxtaposition of diverse beliefs challenged the plausibility of minority views"<sup>56</sup>, such as Judaism. Throughout the Ptolemaic era, this would become more and more obviously an issue, although the Gentile attitudes towards appeared welcoming at first.

As explained in the last chapter, the work of Aristobulus comes to light in the receptive government of Ptolemy IV Philometor. In consequence of the "philo-Semitic" policies of Philometor's rule in Egypt (180-145 BCE), it was fixed a silent pact with the Jews, who were then seen in comparable manner to other philosophical sects established in Alexandria, such as Dionysism and other mystery cults. No doubt, to judge by Aristobulus's writings and Philometor's receptiveness, the picture could not look more friendly to Jews. Actually, in this particular setting, the hypothesis that Aristobulus was indeed the king's tutor, or maybe his advisor in Jewish matters, as Tcherikover proposed, is to be seen as perfectly plausible.

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53 Ibid., p. 5.

54 G. G. Stroumsa, "Scripture and *Paideia* in Late Antiquity" in Niehoff [ed.], *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of the Ancient Interpreters* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 31

55 J. Collins, op. cit., pp. 2-3.

56 Ibid., p. 3.

Meanwhile, with the Maccabean conflict in the Seleucid empire, the social space of Alexandria, capital of the pacific Ptolemaic domain, was being increasingly modified by the growing Jewish community, inflated with the recent migrational incomes from Palestine<sup>57</sup>. At this point, a large and diverse Jewish community thrived in plain sight within the social space of Alexandria, altering thoroughly its landscapes in a short amount of time – to the point that, by the first century BCE, as Philo describes, there would be plenty and spread synagogues (Jewish meeting-houses) across the city<sup>58</sup>.

In face of that, although pacific, Egypt was not immune to the escalating tensions in Palestine. The quick changes in the capital's aspect inevitably caused an escalating resentment on more conservative Alexandrians and the increasing participation of Jews in the communal life rendered some problems more evident. Obviously, if it comes to a growing ethnical population and their more and more endangered social status in the Egyptian capital, we are talking about the conditions of citizenship rights and participation in the civic institutions of that city. Let us further examine such a picture.

*6.2.1. Jewish status in Ptolemaic Alexandria.* During the second century BCE, along with Philometor's receptiveness and the growing of the Jewish community, Egypt would watch the distance between Jews, Hellenes and Egyptians decrease with their law coming to be determined in a territorial basis<sup>59</sup> – a temporary equalization of civic rights which, in any case, does not necessarily reflect the actual social situation. According to Segré, throughout the Ptolemaic era, "the Jews possessed [...] their own distinctive communal organization (*politeuma*), but the religious basis upon which it rested prevented any real assimilation or cultural syncretism with their non-Jewish neighbors"<sup>60</sup>.

Ultimately, thus, the main obstacle for the integration of the Jewish community among the Alexandrian society was unfortunely their own customs which, in that context, set up an apparently impassable barrier between them and all other individuals. Eagering to maintain their identity in the Western Diaspora, the Jews kept strict observance of their behavioral

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57 According to Tcherikover, in synthesis, there are two causes for the receptiveness towards Jews in second-century Ptolemaic Era: "the 'philo-Semitism' of the king [Philometor, and the flow of a new stream of Jewish immigrants from Palestine" [CPJ 1], p. 20).

58 Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium* 132, 134 (Colson [LCL 379], pp. 295-406): "[...] the meeting-houses [synagogues], of which there are many in each section of the city"; "[...] so many Jews live massed together in the neighbourhood".

59 Angelo Segré, "The Status of the Jews in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt: New Light from the Papyri" in *Jewish Social Studies*, vol. 6, n. 4 (Oct., 1944), p. 379.

60 *Ibid.*, pp. 376-377.

traditions, such as sexual discretion and abstaining from pork meat, and religious rituals, like circumcision and the celebration of Sabbath, and very few of them apostatized to become Greeks. As Segré argues, the prescriptions of the Jewish religion presented "practical obstacles to joint communal life [and thus,] an insuperable obstacle to the existence side by side in the same city"<sup>61</sup>, at least with the same status of citizenship.

One may inquire, of course, how actually relevant such a title was in the day-to-day life of the inhabitants of Ptolemaic Alexandria. As Alston explains, "the importance of Alexandrian citizenship under the Ptolemies is unclear, though the continuation of deme organization throughout the period suggests that it had some function"<sup>62</sup>, being it poorly defined by that time and extended basically to everyone who spoke Greek. Generally speaking, the rights of citizenship were conditioned to the participation in the main civic institutions, more importantly, the educational ones, such as the Gymnasium; and the participation in most civic institutions, for its turn, depended solely on speaking Greek.

As Koskenniemi explains, although scattered and mostly inconclusive, evidence in papyrology enables us to assert that "the incredible bureaucracy of Ptolemaic Egypt, which employed the Greek language, [...] required and hired a great number of officials of all ranks, including people to use both the native language and Greek"<sup>63</sup>. In consequence, there was a constant need for individuals of different *ethnos* willing to be educated, most notably in the capital, where the court administration was situated, and where the large educational offer represented an opportunity of social mobility. Koskenniemi describes the picture:

Few if any of the culture centers of the Mediterranean world could compete with Alexandria. Strabo mentions "the gymnasium" in Alexandria, but it is inconceivable that such a city would have only one of them, and other sources do mention more. The great city had enjoyed the patronage of enlightened rulers from the very beginning, and the Museion and Library offered opportunities second to none in the Hellenistic world.<sup>64</sup>

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61 Ibid., p. 379.

62 Richard Alston, "Philo's 'In Flaccum': Ethnicity and Social Space in Roman Alexandria" in *Greece & Rome*, vol. 44, n. 2 (Oct., 1997), p. 169. Alexandrian citizenship is actually a matter of debate even in modern historical criticism, cf. M. A. H. El-Abbadi, "The Alexandrian Citizenship" in *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, vol. 48 (Dec., 1962), pp. 106-109.

63 Erkki Koskenniemi, "Jews and Secular Education in Alexandria" in T. Seland [ed.] *Reading Philo: A Handbook to Philo of Alexandria* (Grand Rapids, Cambridge: W. B. Eerdmans, 2014), p. 112.

64 Idem; cf. Strabo, *Geographia* 17.1.10 in H. L. Jones [transl.], Loeb Classical Library, n. 267 [LCL 267] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1932), p. 41. On sources mentioning other gymnasia, Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), vol. 2, p. 93 refers to *P.Tebt* 700.37. On the Museion and the Library, see Andreas Glock, "Museion" in *Der Neue Pauly*, vol. 8 (2000), pp. 507-11 and Maren Niehoff, *Jewish Exegesis and Homeric Scholarship in the Library of Alexandria* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).



Based on the names listed in papyri, Fraser assumes that the gymnasion in the Egyptian capital admitted Greek-speaking people, regardless of nationality, during the Ptolemaic period<sup>65</sup>. The anthropologist "refers to nearly five hundred names appearing in early Alexandrian papyri: about half of all persons bear Greek names but are not citizens; [...] eighteen had Egyptian names, and only ten were called 'Alexandrians'"<sup>66</sup>. Thus, the documents show that even some Egyptians could have a good education in the gymnasiums, which indicates by association that Jews could too, since much seems to point out that Jewish people had an intermediary position between the native Egyptians and the Greek colonists, considered generally as "tax-Hellenes"<sup>67</sup>.

However, the available knowledge on the Jewish community of Alexandria, obscured by the bias of traditional sources on this matter, does not allow us to precisely define the legal status of Jews in Alexandria. Josephus claims that the Jews had equal civic rights (*isopoliteia*) in Alexandria under the Ptolemies, as well as in Seleucid Antiochia<sup>68</sup>, but his testimony is considered to be largely one-sided and sometimes even false, a historically unreliable apology to Hellenization. Still, even Josephus admits that "at Alexandria there had been incessant strife between the native inhabitants and the Jewish settlers since the time when Alexander [...] granted them, as a reward for their assistance, permission to reside in the city on terms of equality with the Greeks"<sup>69</sup>. Philo, although he retains a lot more conservative attitude, also suggests that Jews had more friendly relations with Alexandrians during the Ptolemaic period than they actually had, as we argued before<sup>70</sup>. Under the light of papyrological evidence, however, Koskenniemi concludes that

it is true that Jews were numerous in the city, and they were favoured by the Ptolemies, who especially needed loyal mercenaries, [... but] they were never considered Ἀλεξανδρίνοι [Alexandrians] as a class, although most were equal with the numerous Greeks having no status as citizens.<sup>71</sup>

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65 Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), vol. 1, pp. 76-7.

66 Ibid., pp. 91-2 apud Koskenniemi, op. cit., p. 113, viz. note 55.

67 W. Clarysse & Dorothy J. Thompson, *Counting the People in Hellenistic Egypt*, vol. 2: *Historical Studies* (Cambridge: University Press, 2006), pp. 145: "besides a few Egyptians and the majority group of immigrants from the wider Greek world, some other non-Greek immigrants also enjoyed this status – Jews, Thracians and probably others too".

68 In Alexandria, cf. Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.36 (Thackeray [LCL 186], p. 304-7). In Antiochia, cf. Josephus, *Jewish War* 7.44; 7.110 in Thackeray [transl.], Loeb Classical Library, n. 210 [LCL 210] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), pp. 516-9, 536-7.

69 Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.487-8 in Thackeray [transl.], Loeb Classical Library, n. 203 [LCL 203] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), pp. 512-13.

70 Cf. p. 59, viz. note 89 above; Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium* 141 in Colson [transl.], Loeb Classical Library 379 [LCL 379] (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), p. 71 and *In Flaccum* 62 (Colson [LCL 363], p. 337) suggest a tolerant relationship between Alexandrians and Jews under the Ptolemies.

71 Koskenniemi, op. cit., p. 114.

Furthermore, the practical obstacles for the joint life in the gymnasia, as we said, were far from few and easy, and obviously implied many reservations in the Jewish mentality as well as many inquiries in that of the Alexandrians, as Aristobulus's fragments above suggest. In this sense, Kasher argues that, only a hundred years after our philosopher's date, "the Jews (as an organized political body) not only refrained from seeking entry into the Alexandria gymnasium, but actually opposed and attacked it"<sup>72</sup>. The author proposes that Jewish athletes must have trained in separate "Jewish gymnasia", however, the affirmation lacks basis<sup>73</sup>. According to Kasher, already in the early Roman period,

any communal Jewish desire to join the gymnasium is imaginary. While some individual Jews may have been interested in the gymnasium in order to gain Alexandrian citizenship, they were most probably apostates, and their small number could not have created a problem great enough to bring to the attention of the emperor. Nor is it reasonable to suppose that Jews would have joined openly, and been welcomed by the Alexandrian.<sup>74</sup>

Papyrological evidence, however, does not indicate that much welcomeness, notably from the second century BCE onwards and especially that late. The example of Jerusalem, in the Seleucid empire, is quite illustrative. As the first and second books of Maccabees testify, during early Seleucid era, the Jews of Jerusalem had also been granted the same sort of autonomy they had in Alexandria, living as an ethnic group (*ethnos*) according to their own law<sup>75</sup>. However, under Antiochus IV Epiphanes (c. 176 BCE), as Segré argues, "their condition underwent a radical change, [... once] this monarch replaced the Law of Moses by a Greek constitution"<sup>76</sup>. I Macc 1:10-15 tells the story of certain renegade Jews of Jerusalem who, in those days, came out from Israel and sought to "make a covenant with the Gentiles around", "misleading" many among them<sup>77</sup>.

Some of the Jewish people, thus, eagerly went to king Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who authorized them to observe the same ordinances as others in the reign<sup>78</sup>. The book further records that "they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, and removed

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72 Aryeh Kasher, *The Jews in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt: The Struggle for Equal Rights*, Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum, vol. 7 [TSAJ 7] (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1985), p. 312.

73 On "Jewish gymnasium", see Kasher, "The Jewish Attitude to the Alexandrian Gymnasium in the First Century A.D." in *American Journal of Ancient History*, vol. 1 (1976), pp. 148-61; Kasher [TSAJ 7], pp. 98, 202-206, 311-320, 335-37. For counter arguments, see Allen Kerkeslager, "Maintaining Jewish Identity in the Greek Gymnasium: a 'Jewish Load' in CPJ 3.519" in *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period*, vol. 28, n. 1 (1997), pp. 12-33.

74 Kasher, op. cit., p. 312.

75 Cf. I Macc 1:3 and II Macc 4:10, 19.

76 Segré, op. cit., p. 379.

77 [NRSV] I Macc 1:11; cf. Rahlfs [LXX], 1671.

78 Cf. I Macc 1:10-15.

the marks of circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant"<sup>79</sup>. Thus, the biblical source attest for dissenting Jews who went as far as to conceal their circumcision, probably "undergoing painful reverse surgery"<sup>80</sup>, as notes Jordan. However, as the opinion of author of I Maccabees clearly illustrates, for the vast majority of Jews, to join with the Gentiles in such a manner meant to "sell themselves to doing evil"<sup>81</sup>. Anyhow, "under the new dispensation, [only] Jews of the upper class achieved the status of 'Jews of the gymnasium' (*apo gymnasiou*) and ranked as the civic equals of the Greeks; while others, who remained outside of the gymnasium, continued as plain Jews"<sup>82</sup>, as Segré concludes.

Considering the anti-gymnastic attitude of most Jews testified in I and II Maccabees, one could easily inquire: why would a Jew even want to renounce their faith in order to participate in the gymnasium? Goldstein explains that throughout the Hellenistic world, completing traditional Greek education in either a gymnasium or an ephebic organization afforded men a higher status in their new Greek surroundings, even citizenship rights<sup>83</sup>. In Egypt, accordingly, evidence recently found in papyri from the early Roman period suggests that Jews had actually participated in the Greek gymnasiums, although their social integration would face challenges there as well.

An important Greek document, found in Egypt and first published in 1950, discussed the presence of Jews in gymnasia. Very fragmented and open to interpretation, the papyrus originally called *P. Schub. 37* and now entitled *CPJ 3.519* is a persistent matter of scholarly debate. Its reconstructed text reads as follows:

Col. 1 ...this man too bearing a Jewish burden. — Why do you laugh? Why are some of you disgusted at what was said or at the man you see? But somehow some behaved more properly to us yesterday....

Col. 2 ...will think outspokenly (?) about those who admitted to the contest. Or is it indeed reasonable that a man should be excluded even because of bodily ugliness — and yet this sort of thing is regarded as a misfortune, not at all as matter for blame — but when there is in a man intemperance both of life and of regimen (?)....

Col. 3 ...him...to run, as when we try to obstruct those who are competing against us, but not those who are not competing against us. And they did well to admit their own weakness, so that you may neither think yourselves deprived of some great spectacle and...

(Fr. C.) ...judge... yet... new city (Neopolis?)... age (ages)... larger... have... after falling ill...not...<sup>84</sup>

79 [NSRV] I Macc 1:14-15a=Rahlfs [LXX], p. 1671: ὠκοδόμησαν γυμνάσιον ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις κατὰ τὰ νόμιμα τῶν ἔθνῶν, καὶ ἐποίησαν ἑαυτοῖς ἀκροβυστίας καὶ ἀπέστησαν ἀπὸ διαθήκης ἀγίας.

80 Holly Ann Jordan, *A History of Jews in Greek Gymnasia from the Hellenistic Period through the Late Roman Period*, M.A. Thesis, University of Georgia (Athens: 2009), p. 59.

81 ἐπράθησαν τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ πονηρὸν (Rahlfs [LXX], p. 1671).

82 Segré, op. cit., p. 380.

83 Goldstein, [AB 41A], p. 229.

84 *CPJ 3.519* [transl.] (Alexander Fuks & Menahem Stern [ed.], "A Fragment of a Discourse on Athletics and Theatrical Performances", *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum*, vol. 3: *Late Roman and Bizantine Period*

Many understandings have been given to the fragmentary excerpt above, having scholars dated it "as early as 63 BCE and as late as 200 CE"<sup>85</sup>. Here, we are interested in one particular hypothesis about the narrative, put forth by Allen Kerkeslager, who recently implemented a detained study specifically on this record<sup>86</sup>. As one can see above, the papyrus depicts the negative attitudes of what seems to be a Greek audience, when faced with the vision of a "man carrying a Jewish burden" (col. 1).

According to Kerkeslager, the papyrus would have been written in the early Roman period, between 20 BCE and 41 CE, and the mention of a "Jewish burden" is a reference to a circumcised Jew who was being evaluated among the athletes of an Egyptian gymnasium<sup>87</sup>. The author believes that the scene portrayed above features a speaker before a group at a gymnasium, as one can see above in col. 2., discussing the "disqualification of a [Jewish] athlete by the officials responsible for the preliminary evaluation of [...] an athletic competition"<sup>88</sup>. While the speaker seems to be in favor of allowing the Jew to compete, the audience of the gymnasium sees this Jew as an object of humor and revulsion because of his physical marker of ethnicity.

Other scholars have argued that the mentioned "burden" could refer to another typically Jewish load being carried by the athlete<sup>89</sup>, however, Kerkeslager makes a summarily demonstrates that a circumcised phallus is the most likely physical object that could have been as readily identified with Jews or Judaism by a large Gentile audience<sup>90</sup>. Remarkably, Feldman agrees with Kerkeslager and edges even further in his criticism to Kasher's

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[CPJ 3], p. 519)=P. Schub 37=P. Berol 13406.

85 Jordan, op. cit., p. 58. Schubart dated the papyrus on paleographic grounds to c. 200 CE; cf. Wilhelm Schubart, *Griechische Literarische Papyri*, Berichte über die Verhandlungen der Sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaft zu Leipzig, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Band 5 (Berlin: Akademie, 1950), p. 69. Fuks and Stern put the text in either the late second or the early third century CE; cf. Fuks & Stern [CPJ 3], p. 119.

86 The full work is Allen Kerkeslager, "Maintaining Jewish Identity in the Greek Gymnasium: a 'Jewish Load' in CPJ 3.519" in *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period*, vol. 28, n. 1 (1997), pp. 12-33.

87 Ibid., p. 20.

88 Ibid., p. 18.

89 Fuks and Stern believe that the papyrus makes reference to a theatrical performance where an actor was identified as a Jew by an object he was carrying, a "load" rather than a "burden", maybe a Torah scroll or a *tefillin*; see Fuks & Stern [CPJ 3], pp. 116-19. Their interpretation is thoroughly criticized in Kerkeslager, op. cit., pp. 14-16, but he concedes that the excerpt is too fragmentary to dismiss it.

90 Kerkeslager, op. cit., pp. 20-23 mentions seven arguments, based on the interpretation of the text under the light of historical and linguistic evidence, defending the identification of Jewish object mentioned in CPJ 3.519 with a circumcised phallus.

supposition of "Jewish gymnasiums", stating that there is no evidence whatsoever that Jews were ever participating in non-Greek Jewish gymnasia<sup>91</sup>.

If one is to accept this interpretation and the fragment above can indeed be traced back to Egypt<sup>92</sup>, it becomes an important text within the present discussion, since it not only represents a non-Jewish evidence of Jews participating in the Greek gymnasia. The references to "laughery", "disgust" and "exclusion" in the text, however, illustrate quite well the kind of mockery, prejudice and discrimination that most Jews were increasingly subjected to in this context. Moreover, it shows a visibly circumcised Jew training in gymnasium, suggesting "not all Jews participating in gymnastic training were as Hellenized as the writers of 1 and 2 Maccabees would have us think"<sup>93</sup>, as argues Jones. In addition to our argument, if the identification with circumcision stands, once it is presented not only as a "burden", but also as "bodily ugliness", "misfortune" and "intemperance", the text is an evidence for specifically anti-Jewish sentiment in Egypt by the first century BCE.

Although the source quoted above is dated later than Aristobulus, it is arguable that, only a hundred or so before that, the status of Jews in Ptolemaic Alexandria, although undeniably better than in Roman period, was not actually the same of the Greeks, especially as far as these latter concerned. Most likely, even under the favorable policies of Philometor, the part of Jews in the civic rights was still something to be debated within the most Hellenized elites of Egypt. However, small numbered as Kasher proposed or not, there really are some instances, specifically under the Ptolemies, of deeply assimilating Egyptian Jews, who not only possessed equal citizenship but, more notably yet, were able to achieve official positions in court, as briefed in the previous chapter.

Along with Onias, whose proximity with the Ptolemaic court was already treated<sup>94</sup>, Josephus – who was likely himself an Alexandrian citizen – mentions still another Jewish military, "Dositheos, who served as *strategos* under Philometor and his wife Cleopatra", as

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91 Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 59.

92 Although it was found in Egypt, there is also doubt concerning the provenance of the papyrus. The text refers to a site called Neopolis ("new city"), which is problematic because there were over 27 sites in Antiquity referred to by this name. Kerkeslager argues that, in Egypt, this Neopolis could refer either to the city of Flavia Neopolis (modern-day Nablus) or to a section of Alexandria also called Neopolis; cf. Jordan, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.

93 Kerkeslager, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

94 §5.2.1-2 above. Cf. Josephus, *A.J.* 12:387-8 (Marcus [LCL 365], pp. 200-2) and *A.J.* 13.62-73 (Marcus [LCL 365], pp. 256-62).

Kasher himself admits<sup>95</sup>. Moreover, not much later, and within a considerably less friendly setting, Paul the Apostle was a citizen of Rome and Philo was a citizen of Alexandria and possibly a Roman citizen as well, having both attended to Greek gymnasium. These few and well-distributed examples of thoroughly Hellenizing Jews are not surprising at all since, at least within the upper classes, "the open attitude of the Diaspora Jews to their Hellenistic environment is amply shown"<sup>96</sup>, as Collins argues.

6.2.2. *Escalating tensions and Philo's pre-setting.* As one might have noted at this point, under the "philo-Semitic" rule of Philometor, Aristobulus could easily have flourished as a member of such a high class Jewry, and it would be exactly the type of mockery and inquisition about Jews exposed above that he speaks in response to in his work. As introduced above, we propose that Alexandria was not immune from the increasing enmity towards Jews in the Hellenistic Middle East because of the Maccabean war in Palestine. For the contrary, it is arguable that, even though more receptive, the Ptolemaic capital was already at this point full with prejudice and resentment against its large Jewish community, who would see the apex of marginalization in the first century CE, as Philo testifies<sup>97</sup>.

As Collins explains, Philo's *In Flaccum* records "in 38 CE, an incident occurred in Alexandria that is often described as the first pogrom"<sup>98</sup> of history. The following excerpts of the philosopher's treatise are quite explicit:

The Jews were so numerous that they poured out over beaches, dunghills and tombs, robbed of all their belongings. Their enemies overran the houses now left empty and turned to pillaging them, distributing the contents like spoil of war, and as no one prevented them they broke open the workshops of the Jews...

[...]

Let us see what was done in peace by our friends of yesterday. After the pillaging and eviction and violent expulsion from most parts of the city the Jews were like beleaguered men with their enemies all round them. They were pressed by want and dire lack of necessities; they saw their infant children and women perishing before their eyes through a famine artificially created, since elsewhere all else was teeming with plenty and abundance, the fields richly flooded by the overflow of the river and the wheatbearing parts of the lowlands producing through their fertility the harvest of grain in unstinted profusion.<sup>99</sup>

95 Kasher [TSAJ 7], p. 61: "we do not know who he [Dositheos] was, though some scholars have been inclined to identify him with the Dositheos mentioned in *P. Tebt.* 818 (CPJ 1. 24) of 174 BCE".

96 J. Collins, op. cit., p. 5. See also Tcherikover [CPJ 1], pp. 27-36; Feldman, op. cit., pp. 57-63.

97 See Philo, *In Flaccum* (Colson [LCL 363], pp. 295-406).

98 J. J. Collins, "Anti-semitism in Antiquity? The case of Alexandria" in *Jewish Cult and Hellenistic Culture: Essays on the Jewish Encounter with Hellenism and Roman Rule*, Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, vol. 100 [SJSJ 100] (Leiden: Brill, 2005), p. 181; cf. Pieter van der Horst, *Philo's Flaccus. The First Pogrom. Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

99 Philo, *In Flaccum* 56, 62-3 [transl.] (Colson [LCL 363], pp. 333-337); since it perform an exemplary function in this investigation, we refrain from criticizing the Greek text of Philo's *In Flaccum*.

As one can see above, the scene is simply barbaric – and this is just a tiny fraction of Philo’s historical testimony on the anti-Jewish mobs in Roman Alexandria. But what does it have to do with Aristobulus’s early context? Well, first of all, the pogrom takes place only two hundred years after Aristobulus’s testified date (180-163 BCE). According to Gruen, "this calamitous incident lacked all precedent"<sup>100</sup>. However, the kind of collective hysteria on violent discrimination described above, specially against an ethnic community as widely disseminated in Alexandria as the Jews<sup>101</sup>, does not appear "incidental", much less the type of thing that pops out of nowhere, but rather culminates after centuries of enmity.

Moreover, many similarities have been pointed, as we have discussed throughout this investigation, between Philo’s and Aristobulus’s approach on Judeo-Hellenistic philosophy, remarkably their allegorical interpretation of the Mosaic Law. As we have seen, at his time, Aristobulus had an issue with the Jewish literalists, whom he criticizes in Frg. 2, proposing to interpret the Law in a "expanded" (μεγαλεῖόν) sense, that is, with the use of allegory. In Philo’s context, when the literalists were still a thing, the matter of the adequate interpretation of the Scriptures was actually in the center of the political debates within the Alexandrian Jewish community, concerning specifically citizenship rights<sup>102</sup>. For Alston, "this legal issue lies near the heart of the dispute, which leads to some ancient and most modern accounts tracing the roots of the dispute to the Ptolemaic period"<sup>103</sup>.

In the earlier period of Ptolemaic era, under Ptolemy I Soter (305-285 BCE) and Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-247 BCE), as we explained above, "the civic status of the Jews seems to have been the same as that of other military colonists"<sup>104</sup> in Alexandria, all of them considered as Greeks, in spite of their many different nationalities. The situation appears to have changed a bit under Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-204 BCE) – not to be confused with Philometor – who, according to the testimony of the Third Book of Maccabees, entertained serious enmities toward Jews. An account on III Macc 2:27-30 depicts the king’s attitude:

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100 Erich Gruen, *Diaspora. Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 67 apud Collins, op. cit., p. 182.

101 Philo, *In Flaccum* 55 (Colson [LCL 363], p. 333): "The city [Alexandria] has five quarters named after the first letters of the alphabet, two of these are called Jewish because most of the Jews inhabit them, though in the rest also there are not a few Jews scattered about. So then what did they do? From the four letters they ejected the Jews and drove them to herd in a very small part of one".

102 Adam Kamesar, *Cambridge Companion to Philo* (Cambridge: University Press, 2009), p. 83: "Philo describes the literalists as ‘micropolitans’ or citizens of a small community, whereas those who look also to the allegorical meaning are citizens of the world or ‘cosmopolitans’"; cf. Philo, *De Somniis* 1.39 (Colson & Whitaker [LCL 275], pp. 314-317).

103 Alston, op. cit., p. 165.

104 Segré, op. cit., p. 378. See also El-Abbadi, "The Alexandrian Citizenship" in *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, vol. 48 (Dec., 1962), pp. 106-109.

προέθετο δημοσίᾳ κατὰ τοῦ ἔθνους διαδοῦναι ψόγον ἐπὶ τοῦ κατὰ τὴν αὐλὴν πύργου στήλην ἀναστήσας ἐκόλαπεν γραφὴν. μηδένα τῶν μὴ θυόντων εἰς τὰ ἱερὰ αὐτῶν εἰσιέναι πάντας δὲ τοὺς Ἰουδαίους εἰς λαογραφίαν καὶ οἰκετικὴν διάθεσιν ἀχθῆναι τοὺς δὲ ἀντιλέγοντας βία φερομένους τοῦ ἦν μεταστῆσαι. τοὺς τε ἀπογραφομένους χαράσσεσθαι καὶ διὰ πυρὸς εἰς τὸ σῶμα παρασήμῳ Διονύσου κισσοφύλλῳ οὖς καὶ καταχωρίσαι εἰς τὴν προσυνεσταλμένην αὐθεντίαν. ἵνα δὲ μὴ τοῖς πᾶσιν ἀπεχθόμενος φαίνηται ὑπέγραψεν ἂν δέ τινες ἐξ αὐτῶν προαιρῶνται ἐν τοῖς κατὰ τὰς τελετὰς μεμνημένοις ἀναστρέφεσθαι τούτους ἰσοπολίτας Ἀλεξανδρεῦσιν εἶναι.<sup>105</sup>

He [Philopator] proposed to inflict public disgrace on the Jewish community, and he set up a stone on the tower in the courtyard with this inscription: "None of those who do not sacrifice shall enter their sanctuaries, and all Jews shall be subjected to a registration involving poll tax and to the status of slaves. Those who object to this are to be taken by force and put to death; those who are registered are also to be branded on their bodies by fire with the ivy-leaf symbol of Dionysus, and they shall also be reduced to their former limited status". In order that he might not appear to be an enemy of all, he inscribed below: "But if any of them prefer to join those who have been initiated into the mysteries, they shall have equal citizenship with the Alexandrians".<sup>106</sup>

As the excerpt above records, in about 217 BCE<sup>107</sup>, Philopator posts a notice expressly "barring from their own temples all who did not sacrifice to *his* gods, and ordering all Jews to be registered among the *laographoumenoi* [people who paid poll-tax] and reduced to a state of servitude"<sup>108</sup>, as Segré explains. Later, under the resistance of most Jews to assimilate into the Dionysiac cult<sup>109</sup>, the king "became so infuriated [...] against those Jews who lived in Alexandria [that] he ordered that all should promptly be gathered into one place, and put to death by the most cruel means"<sup>110</sup>, as III Macc 3:1 testifies. The king ordered that the Jews should gather in the hippodrome and counted in a census, aiming to confiscate their property, and when the census could not be taken because of the high number of the Jews, the enraged king sent his army and drunken elephants against them<sup>111</sup>.

At the occasion, however, as Capponi narrates,

the prayers of the Jewish priest Eleazar and three different divine interventions made the elephants take fright and run over the Egyptian army made the elephants run over the Egyptian army, while another miracle (or perhaps, a Jewish concubine) made the king cease the persecution, free the Jews and even grant them permission to dedicate a stele, a prayer-house, and introduce an annual memorial of the events.<sup>112</sup>

105 Rahlfs [LXX], pp. 1835-36.

106 [NSRV] III Maccabees 2:27-30.

107 Date provided directly by the biblical source and converted to modern calendar in [NSRV] Bible.

108 Segré, *op. cit.*, p. 378.

109 III Macc 2:31-33.

110 [NSRV] III Macc 3:1 (Rahlfs [LXX], p. 1836: [...] τοσοῦτον ἐξεχόλησεν ὥστε οὐ μόνον τοῖς κατὰ Ἀλεξάνδρειαν διοργίζεσθαι ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ βαρυτέρως ἐναντιωθῆναι καὶ προστάξει σπεύσαντας συναγαγεῖν πάντας ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ καὶ χειρίστῳ μὲν τοῦ Ἰσίδου με ταστῆσαι).

111 III Macc 3:12-6:24 (Rahlfs [LXX], pp. 1837-54).

112 Capponi, *op. cit.*, p. 116; cf. III Macc 6:24-41.



Philopator changed his mind, the Jews were freed, but the king still ordered a general registration (*apographai*)<sup>113</sup>, after suggesting to have them "registered as *laoi*, that is, reduced from the status of Greeks to that of native Egyptians and thereby rendered liable the special levy (*laikē sintaxis*) imposed upon the latter"<sup>114</sup>, as Segré explains. The author argues, however, that there is no clear evidence that the Jews paid the poll-tax in papyrological records, although he admits that a poll-tax indeed existed in the third century BCE, as attested in some papyri dated of 236/235 BCE<sup>115</sup>.

Have the Jews been obligated to the levy or not, the fact is that "the Third Book of Maccabees places the first conflict between the royal government and the Jewish community in Philopator's reign; only by a last-minute miracle was the community saved from extermination"<sup>116</sup>, as states Modrzejewski. This instance of early persecution in III Maccabees, summed up with the pogrom testified by Philo in 38 CE, sets very clearly the tone of our argumentation: it demonstrates how tenuous were the acceptance traditionally understood to have been experimented by Jews in the Ptolemaic era. Although Philopator's anti-Jewish polemics apparently had no actual consequences after all, the possible results according to the sources could be catastrophic and, moreover, the stigma entertained by the king persists in the Alexandrian mindset regardless.

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Finally, our previously raised hypothesis that Aristobulus's work was written in response to a context of social inequality and anti-Jewish polemics in Ptolemaic Alexandria, and that his point was to provide intellectual support for the Jewish claims for isonomy in this particular setting, is plainly supported by the sources mentioned above. If one is to concede that both the Alexandrian pogrom reported by Philo and the early persecution under Philopator recorded in III Maccabees are authentic, which no recent scholar seems to doubt in any case, it is quite inconceivable that Aristobulus had experimented a context of such ample receptiveness with Philometor as alleged.

The short interval between the episodes does not allow for the deep cultural changes which would be required to happen if this is so, most notably because not only Philopator's

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113 On *apographai*, see U. Wilcken, *Grundzuge Und Chrestomathie Der Papyruskunde* (Charleston: BiblioLife, 2009), p. 198-99.

114 Segré, *op. cit.*, pp. 378-9.

115 Cf. *P. Tebt.* 3.1.701 (235 BCE); *P. Petrie* 3.174.59b; and *P. Tebt.* 2.846. See S. L. Wallace, "Census and Poll-tax under the Ptolemies" in *American Journal of Philology*, vol. 59 (1938), pp. 418-42.

116 Joseph Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt: From Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian* (Philadelphia, Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1995), p. 61.

persecutive atmosphere would have to rapidly shift to Philometor's friendly attitude, but also to reescalate to the point of actual violence and genocide. Having lived nearly fifty years after the earlier instance of Anti-Jewish discrimination and a hundred fifty before the later and most violent one, Aristobulus was almost certainly subject to some degree of hostility on the part of Gentiles, even though certainly not as bad.

Otherwise, why would the philosopher even be invested so thoroughly in an interprise, for its turn, so similar to that which comes in handy for Philo? Why would he allegorically reconcile Jewish traditions with Hellenistic philosophy, compromising the meaning of his own Law? It is obviously not our aim here to suggest, by the mid-second century BCE, a large problem of judeophobia which endangered the whole Jewish community of Alexandria, but rather the kind of mockery and inquisitorial behavior which appears in *CPJ* 3.519 not much after that, as noted above<sup>117</sup>. In sum, if the evidence of the period is maybe not sufficient to assert the hypothesized social setting, the crossing with earlier and later sources points out firmly to the validity, at least in parts, of our hypothesis.

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117 See §6.2.1, viz. p. 85; cf. Fuks & Stern [*CPJ* 3], p. 519.

## CONCLUSION

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### THE FIGHT FOR EQUAL RIGHTS

This study started, nearly two years ago, with the author's desire of approaching the mythistorical dialogue between the Jews and the Greeks, more strictly under the light of the first comparative analyses correlating these cultures, endeavored pioneerly by the Judeo-Hellenistic philosophers. Aristobulus of Alexandria came up simply as a convenient reduction of this large and mesmerizing initial idea, in face of the limited scope of the present investigation. Along this journey through early Hellenistic Judaism, however, Aristobulus has shown to be not only a very interesting object of research, but also an amazing historical character, with a beautiful trajectory in philosophy and life.

With this effort of research, we have managed to inductively guide the reader from a completely unknown subject to a fully realized historical profile, recurring mostly to primary sources and critical source analysis. In the first part of our discussion, we raised two hypotheses about Aristobulus' figure as testified in the sources and not only were we able to demonstrate them individually, but also prove them compatible with each other. In last chapters, we thoroughly discussed Aristobulus' context under the light of the fragments and the books of Maccabees, launching daring propositions regarding his social setting.

The work of Aristobulus, as we were able to show, is much more than the philosophical aphorisms of a deeply Hellenized Jew, it is also a strategy of resistance in a pagan environment and increasingly hostile to Jews. The philosopher's apologetic interprise, as well as his allegorical method, are examples of how a scholarly work, based in a diversely educated point of view, may help very distinct comprehensions of reality to reconcile. Tracing a parallel with nowadays, Aristobulus's Judeo-Hellenistic philosophy illustrates the powerful role of modern science in overcoming differences and cultivating coexistence.

Hopefully, thus, the study on Aristobulus, in particular, and on Hellenistic Jews, in general, might be an inspiration for cultural tolerance and mutual respect, which may come in handy in the current world. After all, the Jewish history is a lesson of resilience and adaptability, of mantaining one's own identity even under the most disfavorable circumstances. It is no wonder why Jews kept surviving and thriving throughout the last three thousand years, trailblazing the path to progress and peace. For that reason, their legacy should always be remembered and respected as a heritage of humankind.

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## DECLARAÇÃO DE AUTENTICIDADE

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**E**u, **Luy Zeidan Duarte**, declaro para todos os efeitos que o trabalho de conclusão intitulado "**Between the Temple and the Library: the Judeo-Hellenistic Philosopher Aristobulus of Alexandria**" foi integralmente por mim redigido, e que assinaei todas as referências a textos, ideias e interpretações de outros autores. Declaro ainda que o trabalho é inédito e que nunca foi apresentado a outro departamento e/ou universidade para fins de obtenção de grau acadêmico, nem foi publicado integralmente em qualquer idioma ou formato.

Ass: \_\_\_\_\_

