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Report on Rabbinical Thesis of Joseph Karasick
Entitled

"Aspects of Literary and Historical Problems in The Letter of Aristean"

Mr. Karasick's thesis is a very competent exposition of the various scholarly problems raised by the Letter of Aristean. Though he has, necessarily, confined himself to the secondary literature in English and modern Hebrew, there is nevertheless a gratifyingly well-rounded aspect to his study. He has read and absorbed every book and article of significance in English.

His three chapters accord with a logical approach to his topic. First, he presents a summary of the Letter and an abstract of the range of the assessments, comprising both a survey of the quotations or reflections in the ancient writings and then the varying opinions on its authenticity in modern scholarship. His second chapter deals with the historical problems raised by the Letter, and his third with the literary. His total summary is at the conclusion of his third chapter, apparently because the brevity did not seem to indicate the desirability of a separate and fourth chapter.

Mr. Karasick's discernment that the historical problems and the literary questions are, though intertwined, different is perceptively carried out. In brief, his distinction is this: Does the Letter reflect accurate history, or tendentiousness (which he calls propaganda)? Second, What genre of writing does the Letter fit into, in the light of what is known about Hellenistic compositions? The answer to the second question bears, of course, on the first.

Mr. Karasick notes correctly that the issue of historical reliability transcends the question of the LXX translation. His handling of the factors here is very good. But his best work is in Chapter Three where he has followed the lead of Tarn in an acute assessment of the literary problems, such as the relationship to the Symposium and to an Indian work of some similarity.

The limitation in the use of languages keeps this essay from being a definitive exposition. There are, also, certain stylistic infelicities which I have asked the author to correct, and he has agreed to do so.

In view of the good quality of this study and its fine reflection of an understanding of the material, I am happy to recommend the thesis for acceptance.

Samuel Sandmel
Referee

ASPECTS OF LITERARY AND HISTORICAL
PROBLEMS IN THE LETTER OF ARISTEAS

Joseph Karasick

This is submitted in partial fulfillment of
requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts
in Hebrew Letters and Ordination

March, 1961

There are a number of interesting problems which are imposed by a book of the Pseudepigrapha known as The Letter of Aristeas.

The message of this short book is simple. It purports to tell of the translation of the first five books of the Hebrew Bible into the Greek language. However, on closer scrutiny we find that the story raises certain historical and literary questions which are not readily solved. The book was supposed to have been written by an officer in the court of Ptolemy II Philadelphus and he wishes to give the impression that he was a Greek writing about the Jewish faith and its Scripture. But there are certain inconsistencies in the language which would tend to show that the work was actually written by a Hellenized Jew.

There is also a number of errors in historical matters which would incline one to believe that the book was written not at the time it is claimed, but it is probably at a much later date.

The purpose of this essay is not to solve any of these various historical and literary problems. It only poses some of the aspects of the most important of these. The main problems deal with the identity of Aristeas and the date of the writing of this work. In the process of dealing with these problems, an effort has been made to show how the work is interrelated with other Hellenistic documents and also the similarity that is found between it and another Hellenistic type work found in Indian literature.

The Letter of Aristeas, when investigated, is found to be a complicated document both in its literary aspects and with the his-

torical problems that it raises. There is much to be done in further investigation of the work, and there is still the need for a definitive opinion regarding its authorship and its purpose.

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CHAPTER I

The document contained in the Pseudepigrapha to the Old Testament known as The Letter of Aristeas is one of great historical and literary confusion. While it mentions events and characters of definite historical importance, and speaks of them as if contemporary with the authorship of the work, there is much more of a contradictory nature which would lead us to believe that the author was not a member of the times or the society of which he writes and identifies himself.

At first reading, this letter would appear to be the recording and the documentation of the translation of the Bible from Hebrew into Greek. This is the translation known to us as the Septuagint. But the actual steps which take the narrative up to the final fruition of this act are far more lengthy and detailed than the story of the process of the translation itself. In other words, this is not a recording of a single historical event, but a document which gives all the social, religious and related historical facts which caused the Bible to be translated into the Greek language. In fact, it is from this book that the familiar name, the Septuagint, or the Old Testament in Greek, owes its origin. Since the translators of the Bible are numbered here as seventy-two, the Greek term for seventy is used as an indication of the number of translators.

However, while the translation is the central theme and the culmination of the narrative, the book, despite its comparative brevity, is discursive. There are a variety of subjects that it covers, some in more detail than in others. But it is the description of the actual

work of the translation to which all these various facets point. The actual work of the translation is compressed into the final sections of the story.

The narrative takes the form of a letter written by a person named Aristeas to his brother Philocrates. While there is no salutation in the accepted form of a written letter, it follows the style of an epistle of the Ptolemaic period in Egypt. Since Alexandria in Egypt is the primary locale of the events of the letter, it is assumed to be the place of its origin. The writing of pseudonymous epistles was a favorite form of literature in this period and this part of the world.¹ It follows the hellenistic rules for narrative prose in the form of an epistle.² The tone of the letter is that of an author who would have us believe that he is a pagan Greek in the court of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (reigned 285-247 BCE). Since part of the present plan of this work is to elaborate on this point, the evaluation of this claim will be made later.

The contents of the book are briefly as follows. Demetrius of Phalerum, the reported librarian of the Alexandria library, proposes that King Ptolemy II, since he has recently freed the Jewish slaves in Egypt, follow his magnanimous act by asking the Jews for a translation of their holy law for the library (1-28). This the king feels is a fine idea and he acts immediately by writing a letter to Eleazer, High Priest in Jerusalem, asking him to send seventy-two men to translate these scriptures (34-40), and Eleazer's reply in the affirmative with the names of the translators, six men from each of the twelve tribes of

Israel (41-50). The king then sends emissaries to Jerusalem with gifts for the Temple. These gifts are described in great detail (51-82). While the emissaries are in Jerusalem, they describe the city, the countryside and the Temple (83-130). Eleazer bids the visitors farewell (121-127), and gives a long defence of Jewish law (128-171). The translators go to Alexandria (172-186) and then follows the longest section of the tale. It is a banquet given the honored guests over a period of seven days. The king asks each of them a question and he is answered by each man in most brilliant fashion (187-304). This is in the nature of a symposium. The final short section deal with the translation and reception of the law, first by the people and then by Ptolemy (301-322).

The importance of this book is not the book itself, but the influence it has had on later historians. The effect of its message has been profound upon later literature. Regardless of what the true sources of the letter may have been, it seems to be the earliest recorded document about the translation of the Bible into Greek. Although the date of this work is in doubt and is the subject of controversy, it is generally agreed that all literature dealing with the same specific event is subsequent in its authorship.

Also, the question of the translation itself is the sole reason for this particular work's importance in later literature. Since the Greek Bible was the important source of the Old Testament in the coming Christian doctrines, this letter took on added importance in the eyes of the men who were preparing the initial documentary evidence for Christianity. The Greek Bible is the source of virtually all the citations in the New Testament; therefore, it was all the more valuable for the

founders of the newly emerging faith to have a document upon which they could rely for their own divine messages.

The earliest reference to this work is attributed to the Jewish historian, Aristobulus. It has not survived intact and it is quoted by Eusebius (260-340 CE).³ It purports to have been addressed to King Ptolemy VI Philometer (181-145 BCE), but this claim to so high an antiquity has been disputed by many critics.⁴ Since we have only the word of Eusebius for this document and there is no other reference to the work by earlier historians, the citation has led to great confusion in the dating of the "Letter of Aristaeas."

Closer in time to the letter is the Alexandrian Jewish writer, Philo. In his work, "On Moses",⁵ he does not mention Aristaeas by name, but he does reproduce certain ideas that occur in Aristaeas. Still in detail there are some differences⁶ in detail which have led some to believe that both works have been influenced by a common tradition. The main details of difference which appear are that Philo omits reference to Philadelphus freeing of the Jewish slaves, the visit to Jerusalem, the role of Demetrius of Phalerum and the details of the translation. As Philo's account is much shorter, he omits the detail of the banquets although he does mention it in passing. Perhaps the greatest difference comes at the end of the tale. Aristaeas concludes with only the mentioning of the translation's acceptance. Philo continues to elaborate:

"For this cause there is held to this day every year a festival and public assembly on the island of Pharos, to which not Jews only but multitudes from other nations cross the water, to pay reverence to the spot on which the translation first shed its light, and to give thanks to God for a benefit, ancient yet ever new." (7)

Philo then adds that this translation was the cause of national celebration to the place where the translation took place.

While Aristobulus may have been dismissed as invalid by historians and the reference in Philo be considered as probably relying upon the Aristeas work, such cannot be the case of the same story to be found in Josephus.⁸ However, Josephus does not give us all the detail of the text as it appears in Aristeas. The sentences are abridged and recast in the historian's particular literary style. He establishes the fact that the Letter of Aristeas was current in Palestine in the first century C.E. The major difference between Aristeas and Josephus is that the latter omits many details of the Letter, including the introduction (1-8), the list of translators (47-50), journey to Jerusalem and the message of Eleazer (82-171), the banquets with the details of the questions and answers (188-291), and the last line of Aristeas (322).

Madas⁹ finds that the omission of some of this material is quite natural. The historian would not be inclined to use the salutation and the closing of the letter as part of his own writing. For the omission of the names Josephus says "I have not thought it necessary to report the names of the seventy elders who were sent down by Eleazer and brought the Law, their names being set down at the end of the letter." And as for the questions, he says "so that anyone who wishes to find out the details of the questions discussed at the banquet can learn them by reading the book which Aristeas (sic) composed on this account."

There have been many objections to the use of Josephus by some scholars who claim that it is not in keeping with the spirit or does not harmonize with the language of the Antiquities.¹⁰ Some of the details of the original letter have been smoothed over and transitional material added where some of the transitions of Aristeas has seemed abrupt or awkward.¹¹ Also in the description of Ptolemy's gifts to the Temple there is some difference of detail. Aristeas does not enumerate these gifts (51-52), while Josephus lists thirty. Aristeas writes that Demetrius answers the king's question as to the library's inventory as above 200,000 books with the hope of its reaching 500,000. Josephus says that there were exactly 200,000.¹² Aristeas says that the translators were entertained for seven days while Josephus gives the number as twelve. However, for the style of the ancient historian, these details do not make a difference, as detail per se was not the thing for which they strove. The larger framework of the story as given by the two men is similar and since both works were meant to be purposive in object, we can assume that these slight matters would not have been of much concern to them.

Since the Letter of Aristeas is important to the rise of Christianity, it is this historical process which has caused the work to be important. What its original intent may have been is of no concern to the Church historian, as the translation of the Septuagint and its divinity are central in the theology of the new movement. It is little wonder then that the work was used as an important source document in early Church history. We find it used and quoted by men such as Justin Martyr (100-165 CE),¹³ an anonymous author called Pseudo-Justin,¹⁴ who

adds fanciful embellishments of his own, Irenaeus (170 CE),¹⁵ who uses some of the same elaborations, Clement¹⁶ of Alexandria (150-212) who still continues to enlarge the story by comparing the story to the inspiration of Ezra in reviving Scripture after the return from exile, and Tertullian (c160)¹⁷ who is the only one to mention Aristaeas as the source of his writing. The popular legend of the seventy-two writers working separately and comparing the results of their translations, finding them to be identical, is popular with these historians. Where the beginning of this elaboration may have been is a question that would depend on further study. None of the earlier sources ever make mention of this fact. The Church Fathers generally accepted this belief and legend, even though there is some modification in different writers.¹⁸ One exception is Jerome (348-420).¹⁹ He states that this belief is inconsistent with the earlier tradition. But the tale had become too powerful through the ages. By the time of Augustine (354-430) it was so well preserved that he uses it as fact in his book, "City of God."

Probably the best known of the early Christian writers to make use of Aristaeas and give credit was Eusebius (265-340 CE).²⁰ He uses about one quarter of the work in unadorned and straightforward fashion. While he uses the Aristaeas document and gives the author credit, he also intertwines the story with quotations of Philo, Josephus and Aristobulus to make a smooth narrative. Eusebius did not write much in the way of commentary, but used short, pithy phrases and statements to bind the work of other men together in the form of a straight, uninterrupted narrative. It is by comparing the quotes of Eusebius that

much of the textual criticism of latter day scholarship has been able to reconstruct and correct many of the manuscripts of the letter.

Both the Letter of Aristaeas and legends arising from the translation of the Bible into Greek has influenced rabbinic writing. Whereas the translation has been used by the Christians as central in their scheme, the rabbis in their writing have only made allusions to the incidents. The translation was not considered important, because these men still had the Hebrew Text as their source document. None of the writers mention Aristaeas by name or give the source of their writing. Whether these writings are inspired by this book or go to another independent source is a moot question. As with most rabbinic writing, only the bare facts are given without too much elaboration.

"On the eighth day of Teveth, the Law was written in Greek in the days of King Tolmai, and darkness came upon the world for three days." 21

It can be seen from this quotation that the translation did not have a positive effect upon the rabbis who wrote this portion. There are a few other rabbinic sources which have some meaning in the study of the Letter of Aristaeas. Since rabbinic literature cannot be dated to the beginning of each individual section of tradition, it would be impossible to determine the exact frame of reference each would have to the present work. We can assume though that the codification of all of the works are subsequent to the Letter of Aristaeas and that through tradition and application they do have something to do with each other.

"The Law must not be written in ordinary Hebrew²² not in Aramaic nor in the Median language nor in Greek. A copy written in any foreign tongue or foreign character shall not be used for reading in the services, but only one written in Assyrian characters." 23

24
 "It happened once that five elders wrote the Law in Greek for King Tolmai; and that day was a hard day for Israel, like the day on which Israel made the golden calf,²⁵ because the Law was not capable of being interpreted according to all its requirements.

"Again it happened to King Tolmai that he assembled seventy²⁶ elders and placed them in seventy cells, and did not make known to them wherefore he had assembled them; but he came to each of them in turn and said to them, 'Write me out the Law of Moses your master.' God put counsel into the heart of every one of them, that they were all of one mind, and they wrote out for him the Law by itself. But they altered thirteen passages in it."

There follows then an enumeration of these passages. It can be seen from this illustration that the translation was not greeted with the joy and enthusiasm of the writers of rabbinic literature as had the writers of Alexandria and the framers of Early Christian history. The thirteen passages of alteration are also mentioned in the Jerusalem Talmud.²⁷ The framers of the Mishna also knew of the translation story because they wrote that the Scriptures could be written in Greek, but the Talmud continues,

"Rabbi Yehuda said that the permission of our rabbis as to writing in Greek extends only to the book of the Law and that is because of what happened in the case of King Tolmai." 28

This is the substance of the Aristeas legend as it reached the rabbis. They, along with the writers of the other traditions, are interested only in the substance of the part about the translation, one of the briefest parts of the narrative. We can see also that the legend of the separate cells also appears in this literature, although it is never mentioned in our story. In fact, there has been no evidence that such a building as described with seventy-two cells had ever been

built on the island of Pharos, where the translation took place, and as we have seen, it was rejected by Jerome.

Rabbinic literature presents a dark, or at best a compromising picture of the legend of the translation. It is not in keeping with the report of the community of Jews of Alexandria as given in the Letter of Aristeas:²⁹

"When the work was concluded Demetrius assembled the community of the Jews at the place where the translation was executed, and read it to the entire gathering, the translators too being present; these received a great ovation from the community also, in recognition of the great service for which they were responsible. And they accorded Demetrius a similar reception, and requested him to have a transcription of the entire Law made and to present it to their rulers." (308-309)

The Letter of Aristeas is not concerned with the translation of the entire Old Testament. Never does it or the books referring to the story say anything about the Bible other than mentioning the Law, which is the substance of the first five books. It is presented as a contemporary record, written by an eye witness. According to our writer it takes place during the lifetime of Queen Arsinoe.⁽⁴¹⁾ Ptolemy Philadelphus was married to two women, both named Arsinoe, so it has become a problem as to which one it is. By using other references it has been assumed this was the second of the two queens.³⁰ If this is true then the date of the events of the book can be fixed between 278-270 BCE. The tone of the book would tend to have us believe that the words were composed almost immediately after the occurrence of the events which it records.³¹ We will deal however with the possible dates of the composition later.

Since the sixteenth century there have been numerous doubts raised as to the genuineness of the Letter of Aristeas. The first came from a commentary on Augustine's City of God. It was written by Ludovicus de Vives.³² However, the book was defended from his attack until 1684 when the first formal criticism of the work was written by Humphrey Hody, a professor of Greek at Oxford. From this time until now the book has been attacked both historically and as a literary work. Yet there is much in the work that will give us historical clues to the nature of the Hellenistic world and Alexandrian Judaism if we can separate the facts from the fancy. Since the time of Hody or even Swete, who was considered one of the great authorities on the Septuagint at the beginning of the twentieth century, there has come to our hands numerous evidence of which these former scholars were unaware. While this cannot solve all the difficulties connected with the Letter of Aristeas, it can shed light on its composition and dating. The historians of the period of the Septuagint and New Testament saw in it only the importance of the translation of the Law. This may be important, but it fails to give us the reason as to why this section takes up only a very small portion at the end. It is true that it is the earliest version we have of this great event in our ecclesiastical history, but scholars have looked to other sections of the book to see what they could find.

An instance of this other kind of investigation can be seen in the work in Egyptian papyri and their relation to this book. Tcherikover³³ says that "in the light of the new evidence earlier information

derived from literary sources also gains new significance. There is no longer any reason for rejecting evidence of the Letter of Aristeas. But we are still faced with the problems of who was the author Aristeas, what was his intentions in writing this letter if he was not a contemporary, when was the book written, and what is its connection with history. There is much evidence leading to answering the questions, but it must only remain evidence from which conclusions can be drawn. We can only surmise from the facts we have at hand. We cannot draw hasty conclusions except where that evidence in the book and from history can show us either the correctness or falsity of statements. While we can agree with Hody we must search further to see if any of the evidence, which he dismissed as wholly unreliable, can be salvaged and used to our benefit. There has been much written about the Letter of Aristeas in modern times in light of new evidence and new discovery that was not accessible to these former scholars. While the problems still remain, this new evidence and scholarship can shed light on this narrative in light of itself and of the literature contemporary to it.

CHAPTER II

If we take the Letter of Aristaeus at its face value, then there is no problem. It is merely the recounting of a simple story, the translation of the Law into Greek. But problems have arisen from the text of this book which have caused men to believe that it was not a book to be taken at face value. Rather, it had another purpose. But before the purpose is to be known, the book and its author has to be placed in a certain historical period. Besides this, the person Aristaeus has to be identified if the purpose of this message is to be discovered. Of less importance but just as interesting is the identification of Philocrates, the one to whom the letter is supposedly written.

As to the identification of Philocrates, the text is all we have. He is mentioned only once by name (1) but later in the poem it says:

"To you who are a lover of learning in matters capable of benefiting the mind it is right to communicate these things. Gladly would I communicate them to all who are like-minded, but in particular to you, whose convictions are genuine and who are not only proven my brother germane in character but also at one with me in striving for good." (7)

From this we might infer that Philocrates could be the blood brother of Aristaeus. But in Greek philosophical writing the idea of kinship is not measured only by blood, but by similarity of conduct and pursuit of the same objects.¹ Then this brother could have been someone who had similar ideas and drives of our author and the term brother could be a formal kind of address. There is no other reference in literature, either here or in other Hellenistic writings, to a Philocrates who can be identified as this one. So the answer is left to the reader who must

interpret for himself this person's identification.

The book and its author present us with more formidable problems. Since the problems become more difficult with the elaborations of later writings, most of the investigation must come from the text itself and with the period of history with which the text deals. In order to get even a semblance of some idea of the purpose of the book we must first look at the book in terms of history contemporary to it. How does it agree and how does it disagree? After we establish the facts of history surrounding the text, then we will be in a better position to interpret whatever problems other than historical with which we are faced.

There are numerous instances where known historical fact and the events described in the Letter of Aristaeus do not coincide. We have already said that the events in the book are supposed to be limited to a short term unspecified, somewhere in the years 278-270 BCE. From the tone of the letter, the author would have us believe that it is very soon after the events took place that he is writing. Yet there are some instances, historical and literary, that may cause us some trouble if we put total faith in the text.

There are two instances in which the author writes what might seem to be an anachronism.

"Now when this business was finished he bade Demetrius to submit a statement concerning the transcription of the Jewish books. These kings used to administer all their business through decrees with great precaution." (28)

The use of the imperfect seems to indicate that the author was remote from the event. There was only one Ptolemy, Soter, before Philadelphus,

so this would seem to include a presently reigning king.² Also in the same vein:

"And so the seneschal Nicanor summoned Dorotheus, in whose province these visitors feel, and ordered him to carry out the preparation in every particular. For such was the arrangement instituted by the king, which you may observe in use even now." (182)

Here also there is an indication of a considerable interval of time. Also it is noted that since this verse refers to the receiving of ambassadors it could take place in any period until 30 BCE, when the Romans took over Egypt and the independent Ptolemy dynasty came to an end.³

The literary anachronism is only the fault that is apparent in the text. There are times when historical events either elude our author or he is totally ignorant of many basic facts of history. For a person writing in a far distant time without notes this might seem to be quite natural. But to be ignorant of contemporary events while writing about them with authority would seem to be highly incongruous. Aristaeus is guilty of many of these historical anachronisms, some very slight and some glaring. Some of these more serious mistakes have a direct bearing on the narrative itself.

Probably the worst of these historical errors is the identification of the man Demetrius of Phalerum, to whom Aristaeus ascribes the responsibility of the translation of the Law and sets him up as head of the Library of Alexandria.⁴ There is documentary evidence to show that this was not the case. In the time of Philadelphus the office of librarian was filled by Zenodotus of Ephesus, and at his demise by Eratosthenes. Demetrius of Phalerum was driven from Athens in 307 BCE

by Demetrius Poliorcetes. He was then brought to Alexandria by Ptolemy I Soter. When the question of the succession of the Egyptian throne was in question, Demetrius backed Soter's eldest son, Ptolemy Keraunus.⁵ For this act of unfaithfulness Philadelphus was not on good terms with the librarian and banished him immediately upon his accession as king in 285 BCE.⁶ He died still in exile shortly afterward. There is a gap of almost eight years between his death and the earliest possible date of the translation. This would seem to be knowledge of the most elementary source if our author were writing at a time contemporary to the event. If it is Demetrius who is responsible, then Soter is the king under whom the translation had taken place. If this is so, then the author is confused about the roles of the first and second Ptolemy.⁷ There is however a possibility that the project of translating the Jewish Law could have been suggested by Demetrius to Soter, though it was not carried out until the time of Philadelphus.⁸ If this is so, then the narrative takes the form of a romance without care or consideration to historical detail.

There is one historical event outside of the translation to which the author pays some attention:

"This day upon which you come I regard as a great day, and each year through all the length of my life it shall be held in high esteem. It happens, moreover, to fall on the day of our victory over Antigonus the battle at sea." (180)

Here is a twofold reason for the king to declare a holiday. The arrival of the elders from Jerusalem and the commemoration of a sea victory.⁹ In this allusion to a naval victory of Ptolemy, we can arrive at two possibilities from documentary history. There was a decisive defeat of

the navy of Philadelphus by Antigonus Gonatas at Cos (258 BCE) which could have been misconstrued by Aristeeas as a victory, or there was an actual victory at Andros years later (245 BCE).¹⁰ But both of these battles were fought after the death of Demetrius and after the death of Arsinoe. Since these two people play so important a role in Aristeeas' dating his narrative, could it be possible that there is another battle which history has no record? There is a suggestion by Elias Bickermann¹¹ that the original Greek text has been corrupted. The name, Antigonus, could have been originally Antiochus against whom Philadelphus made a naval expedition in 280 BCE. But even so, it would be difficult to reconcile this historical data with the other inaccuracies in Aristeeas.

There are also some very celebrated names which the author brings into the story which have bearing on the historiography and dating of the text.

"And the philosopher Menedemus of Eritria said..." (201) This philosopher is reported to have been present at the seven day banquet. There is no direct evidence that this man ever visited Alexandria,¹² and his life span (350-287 BCE) hardly suggests his ever having been anywhere at the time of the reported translation. There is a reference to his having been "sent as envoy to Ptolemy and Lysimachus" by Diogenes Laertius.¹³ But a later historian, Tertullian,¹⁴ rates this source as being unreliable. It is possible also here that Aristeeas is dealing with a historical event which he placed out of its real date into the context of his narrative.

Aristeeas deals with two other historical characters in much the same way.

"Indeed, he said, he had heard Theopompus say that when he was on the point of introducing into his history certain matter which had previously been translated from the Law, too rashly, he suffered a derangement of the mind for more than thirty days." (314)

and also:

"And of Theodectes also, the tragic part I have heard, he added, that when he was on the point of introducing into one of his plays something recorded in the Book, his vision was afflicted with a cataract." (316)

Thackeray¹⁵ feels that these references are untrustworthy. Demetrius who is speaking in this part of the narrative was but a boy of ten when Theodectes died. He feels that the whole citing of these men with regard to specific speeches only enhances the ragged chronology. It seems in light of these questionable statements that it is somewhat ridiculous for our author to have made the statements:

"I suppose that everyone likely to get hold of this account will find it incredible. But to falsify concerning matters extant in writing is shameful. Indeed, if I were to pass over any print, it would be an impiety in a subject of this source." (296-297)

Hadas¹⁶ finds that "this together with the insistence on credibility in the sentences to follow is virtually an admission of the fictional character of the episode of the banquet. The romance writers regularly assert their veracity, and in tones such as this, when their statements are most dubious."

We have also seen in the passages above that there is a suggestion of the Law having been translated prior to this time. If

there had already been a translation, why was there a need for another? Yet, there are some other references to a translation before this time. They may not be actual statements, but they are allusions to the fact that the reader can hardly mistake. Aristeeus makes these references in passing assuming that he is telling a believable story while not really aware of the inconsistencies that are contained in it. There are, for instance, specifications for a golden table to be sent to Eleazar as a present when the envoys go to Jerusalem to request translators to come to Alexandria. In the text of Aristeeus this table is said to be of "pure gold." (57) However in the preceding verse we read that the articles were to be made for beauty where no prescription existed but:

"...where there were written prescriptions their measurements were to be adhered to." (56)

Now in the Hebrew Bible we read the following prescription for the table:

"And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, and make thereto a crown of gold round about." 17

And also:

"And he overlaid it with pure gold, and made thereto a crown of gold round about." 18

The Hebrew Bible specifies that the gold be overlaid, but the present to Eleazar is pure gold. This is also the specification of the table as given in the Septuagint. Here the two differ considerably and since the Septuagint did not exist, according to Aristeeus, at this time, how was it possible to build a table according to non-existent specifications? But to make this more positive Aristeeus adds:

"...I mean, gold was not overlaid upon other material, but a solid metal plate was put in place." (57)

Here it seems that Aristeeus was aware of the Hebrew specification but chose to ignore it. Yet he ignores the specification and the translation he desires does not exist yet so that the table could be built according to it. It could be then that there was another translation in existence giving the craftsmen the design for a pure gold table. Could Aristeeus have been aware then of another prescription which he chose to reject?¹⁹

There is also the statement by one of the guests answers a question of the king with the words:

"...for he calls a friend the equal of a man's soul" (228)

Here is an addition of the Septuagint in the same words which are not found with the same meaning in the Hebrew Bible:

"...or thy friend, that is as thine own soul."²⁰

The translation is put into the mouth of the speaker before the act of the translation had even started! These are only some of the inconsistencies which are found in reference to the biblical texts. Yet most important of all according to our source is that the Law is referred to as Scripture²¹ (155-168).

It is shown from these passages then that our author's historiography is somewhat erroneous. Yet he tries to convince us that he is a noble or an officer of some sort in the court of Philadelphus. He speaks of all the events as if he were actually in attendance and he gives us what might be termed today as an eye-witness account. Yet we see that he also through slips of writing and tenses must have been

living at a time later than the events. He is completely confused regarding individuals, so much so that he has people of different time living as contemporaries; he is hazy about history and he uses the language of the Septuagint before the book was actually in existence.

If this is the case then who is Aristes and when did he write this letter? Somewhere in the end of the second century or the beginning of the first century BCE there was a book written called Concerning the Jews. A portion of this book still is extant in the writings of Eusebius.²² But even here Eusebius is quoting Aristes through the means of another historian, Alexander Polyhistor.²³ This fragment deals with a passage from the book of Job, which was probably translated into Greek after the Law. Our Aristes does not mention any other section, and this excerpt is totally unlike anything we find in the literary style of the letter. Hadas feels that our author "may have assumed this name, intending the remark about the earlier writing he had sent to Philocrates to allude to the genuine Aristes' book." This excerpt reads:²⁴

"On a previous occasion also I transmitted to you an exposition of matters I deemed worthy of record concerning the race of the Jews which I received from the most erudite High Priests in the most erudite land of Egypt." (6)

But this leaves us little to go on. It only tells us, perhaps falsely, that the authors of the fragment and the letter are one and the same. Other than this we have nothing. All we can do is to seek evidence about the author through the language of his letter so that the purpose can also be made clear.

Herbert T. Andrews in his introduction to the Letter of Aristes in The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament feels that the author could not have been a Greek courtier. His view is upheld by I. Abrahams, but he adds, "(he) relies entirely upon non-Jewish sources of information."²⁶ His knowledge of and devotion to the traditions of Judaism seem incredible for a pagan. There are many places in the letter where he mentions the traditions and authority of the Jews as central. Hadas notes that "he avoids uttering the name of God, and even the epithet, Lord, which was commonly used in Alexandrian Jewish writings."²⁷ There is even one passage where he avoids the use of the tetragrammaton.

"Upon his head he has the tiara as it is called, and on top of this the inimitable mitre, bearing engraven in sacred letters upon a plate of gold set between his eyebrows the name of God filled with glory." (98)

Then, too, for a Greek he seems to be intolerant of idolatry.

"Even at this day there are many who are more inventive and more learned than the men of old, and yet they would never hasten to worship them. And those who devise and fashion such fables consider that they are the wisest of Greeks." (137)

Wolfson notes with this verse on the one following that the author is "especially emphatic in his denunciation of the Egyptian worship of beasts and most kinds of creeping things and animals."²⁸

Andrews feels that from this and like passages that we can draw some kind of a picture of the author's personality. "We may conclude that (1) he was a Jew. This is obvious from the tone and purpose of the book; (2) he belonged to Alexandria. (3) He was a propagandist, as is evidenced in the apologetic interest of the book. (4) He belonged to what may be termed the common sense school of philosophy.

There are no flights of speculation in the book. No problems trouble the mind of the author, who is simple and conventional in his treatment of the ethical and religious questions which emerge. (5) His attachment and devotion to the Jewish Law indicate that the author had leanings toward Pharissism, though it must be admitted that his Pharisaism is not of a pronounced type, except in the section dealing with the Jewish Law.²⁹

Since much has been learned about Pharisees in the years since this was written, we can dismiss the last statement as being somewhat biased and out of context. The Pharisee tradition was probably not very strong in Alexandria, if at all existent. The author though may have had some views toward Law which might have seemed similar to Palestinian tradition. This could be attributed to coincidence rather than to any formal ties of one view vis-a-vis the other.

Swete makes an observation based on one random statement of the author.

"I am confident that you in particular, because of your tendency toward holiness and the outlook of those men who live according to the holy Law, will gladly listen to what I purpose to reveal, for you have only lately come over to us from the island and are eager to hear whatever contributes to the soul's edification." (5)

Swete feels "from the mention of Cyprus as the island it has been inferred that Aristeeas was a Cypriot."³⁰ However this is just another conjecture to add to all the others regarding the author. Again all we can do is assume; there is nothing outside the text or inside the text that will give us anything but hints to the identity of

Aristeeas. We can agree or disagree that he was a Jew by the tone of the document but little else. It leaves us now to try to determine the period in which the Letter of Aristeeas was written.

Again we must seek the answer to our problem, this time dating, mainly within the text of the letter. With what we have seen before we find that the time of the letter could not be the time of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, although Aristeeas does narrow that time down to the years of Queen Arsinoë. However, it has also been shown previously that the mention of individuals who are not contemporary with her time adds to the problem of dating rather than simplify it.

There are three main theories that have been advanced regarding the date of Aristeeas and all are open to some kind of attack. Yet each of the theories has a reason for its acceptance. The three theories are (1) Schürer who holds that it was written about 200 BCE; (2) Wendland who places it between 96-93 BCE; and (3) Graetz and Willrich who put it as late as 33 CE during the reign of Caligula.³¹ Schürer bases his argument on the following verse from Aristeeas:

"I questioned them on this point too, why it was they washed their hands before praying. And they explained that it was in witness that they had done no wrong, since the hands are the organs of all activity; in such beautiful and holy spirit do they make all things symbols of righteousness and truth." (306)

Showing a parallel to this idea was the type of thing for which Schürer sought. Since some of the writings of Eusebius who is quoting Aristobolus has had some direct bearing on the letter, he did not have far to look. Here he found the following quotation:

"Behold, the hand of the Lord shall be upon thy cattle, and all that there are in the fields of a great death."³² So that the hands are understood of the power of God: for indeed it is easy to perceive that the whole strength of men and their active powers are in their hands."³³

The thought of the hands being the source of all activity has a similarity in the words of Aristea and those of Aristobulus as quoted by Eusebius. Since Aristobulus also writes of the translation and Schröter feels he is dependent on Aristea, therefore he must have written the work before the year 170 CE when the Eusebius excerpt is considered to have been written first by the earlier Hellenistic historian. But the theory can also work the other way. Since the whole Eusebius-Aristobulus history has been doubted by many to be genuine it might have been the source of Aristea.

The theory of Graetz and Wallrich seems a bit later in time. The Romans took Egypt in 30 BCE and there is no mention of anything Roman or of any kind of Roman experience by another name in the text.³⁴ There is only one vague allusion to the theory of the late date. In the text it says:

"And I said, 'I suppose you mean the informers; he does indeed constantly visit torments and painful forms of death upon them.' 'Yes' he replied, 'it is these men I mean. To watch for the destruction of men is an unholy thing.'" (167)

The informers mentioned here, these men felt, was a supposed reference to the delatores of Rome who operated during the reigns of Tiberius and Caligula. Upon this flimsy evidence the dating was based.³⁵ However, the pretest objection to this theory is the formerly mentioned section from Philo.³⁶ This could not have been written without Aristea,

and Philo's activity was before this reference to the informers could have taken place. So the late date theory also has a glaring flaw which cannot be reconciled.

It is more probable that the middle date, with extended limits, is the most logical for the composition of the letter. The grounds for which Wendland decides upon 96-93 BCE are as follows: In 115 the parts of Ascalon, Jopps, Gaza and Ptolemais are said to be in possession of the Jews. Joppa was conquered about 116 BCE, but Gaza was not captured until 96 BCE, and Ascalon and Ptolemais never became Jewish territory. Gaza's capture is the crucial point for Wendland. However since the author was mistaken about the other two cities he could also have been mistaken about Gaza.³⁷ Where Wendland also has been quite certain that these cities were Jewish cities, the tone of the verse in Aristea does not actually imply this. He only makes the statement that the Jews used the seaports.³⁸ Also, Gaza was destroyed when it was taken by Alexander Jannaeus in 96 BCE. It was not rebuilt until the time of Pompey. The seaport is definitely mentioned as having been used and Aristea mentions nothing about destruction which could lead us to believe it is a prior date although within the same historical period.³⁹

If we are to take the translation into Greek as some indication of the dating of the document we have some indication of it already in Ben Sirā:

"You are urged therefore to read with good will and attention, and to be indulgent in cases where, despite our diligent labor in translating, we seem to have rendered some phrases imperfectly. For what was originally expressed in Hebrew does not have exactly the same sense when translated into another language. Not only this work, but even the law itself, the prophecies, and the rest of the books differ not a little as originally expressed," ⁴⁰

The words of this writer speak as though the translation of the Bible into Greek was already an accomplished fact. It has been assumed that the translation of which the grandson of Ben Sira speaks is the same as the one mentioned in the Letter of Aristeas. This passage we are able to date with a degree of accuracy because the author gives us clues that give us the date almost to the year.

The writer of the prologue to Ben Sira says that he came to Egypt in the thirty-eighth year of Evergetes the King, and translated his grandfather's book during his sojourn there. We know of two kings of Egypt with the name Evergetes. One was Ptolemy III Evergetes who reigned from 246 to 221 BCE. Since he ruled only twenty five years then it is impossible to be at the time of which the writer refers. The other Evergetes was Ptolemy VII Evergetes, Physkon, whose rule was from 115 to 116 BCE, but he reigned as joint king with Ptolemy VI Philometer from 170 to 145 BCE. ⁴¹

According to this reckoning the latter is possibly and probably the one to whom the Ben Sira line refers. He reigned a total of fifty four years. The date that the translation took place then was circa 132 BCE. Now his reference to the Greek translation of the Bible also shows some indication that it was already translated, and we might extend the limits of our probable date from Wendland's to 140-100 BCE.

This would not give us an exact date, but it would give us the era in which the Letter of Aristeas could have been composed without giving us the problems of the theories of the earlier or later dating.

It is highly probable that the writing of the translation of the Bible was a long one extending over many years of Egyptian Jewish history. But the fact that an outsider came to the land of the Hellenized Jew and attacked his translation of the Bible would cause someone to rise up and write his own panegyric to offset this propaganda of a foreigner. The work needed to be upheld and it was for someone to come to its aid. During the more than twenty years which he had spent in Egypt, the grandson of Ben Sira had taken the opportunity not only to study the koine then spoken there, and to write his prologue in this medium, but also to acquire a knowledge of the Greek used for the translation from Hebrew. He ⁴² mentions that he feels obliged to apologize for certain imperfections in the translation. The same imperfections which he admits exist in his own work, he feels are in the translations of his predecessors. When he mentions "translation of the Law," he has in mind the standard edition of the Greek Law, the subject of the Letter of Aristeas. ⁴³ The critical way in which Ben Sira's grandson speaks of the Greek translation of the Jewish Law is much more easily understandable if written immediately after its completion than later, when Aristeas' letter and its propaganda had their effect. ⁴⁴

The words of Ben Sira's grandson were probably the opinion of all the newly arrived emigrants from Palestine who had not yet become acclimatized in Alexandria, and this opinion contradicted that of the

native Alexandrian Jews who saw in the Septuagint the perfect version of the Bible. Aristaeus expressed the opinion of the native Alexandrian Jews. "It is as if he transferred the holiness of Mount Sinai from the original Hebrew text to the Greek translation."⁴⁵ Aristaeus almost admits that this is his purpose:

"The books of the Law of the Jews together with some few others are wanting. It happens that they are written in Hebrew characters and in the Hebrew tongue, and they have been committed to writing somewhat carelessly and not adequately, according to the testimony of experts, for they have never benefited by a king's forthought." (30)

This propaganda for the Greek translation was partly what the author of the Letter of Aristaeus seemed to have in mind. It has been historically significant that Jews who become part of a civilization or a culture where they have developed traditions of their own resent the intrusion of an outside influence which tells them they are not practicing their religion or their folkways correctly. Here is the answer to that intrusion. "It is obvious that the letter describes a translation of the Jewish Law officially approved and accepted by the Jewish Community of Alexandria: no addition; no omission; no revision; cursed be he who makes any alteration! The version to which the letter refers was an authoritative one, and there is no doubt that the letter itself was propaganda for it."⁴⁶

This element of propaganda seems to be strong in Aristaeus. For what other purpose it could be put we will see shortly since there are elements in the letter that transcend the translation alone. It is as though the author was trying to fill a two-fold purpose: the exaltation of Judaism and the excellence of Judaism as put forth in

the Law. We are told that the community of Alexandria declared the translation to be authentic and that they made sure it should be preserved and not altered. It was this same propaganda which so influenced Philo at a later date. (308-311)

"We are familiar with propaganda. Nobody makes propaganda for something a hundred or more years old. Propaganda is made for something contemporary. We can be sure that the translation had just been made when the letter of propaganda was written. When we know the date of the letter, we know that of the translation also."⁴⁷

It is possible that the beginning of the translation of the Bible began in the time of Ptolemy II Philadelphus. But there must have been more to the whole Jewish situation in Alexandria if Aristaeus had so much to write about the surrounding events of the translation, and then left the translation to be the culmination of the whole story. It is possible that by the time of the end of the second century the situation in Alexandria needed some sort of clarification. If Aristaeus wrote his book at the end of the second century and for purposes of propaganda, it would seem natural that it was propaganda directed at the Jews for some Jewish purpose. The second century was a period which abounds in Jewish polemics and apologetics.⁴⁸ The writer is now universally regarded as an Alexandrian Jew and not a Greek as he would lead us to believe. He seems too well versed in the problems of Ptolemaic Jewry. The problem of identity and dating seem to be hazy still. But there is evidence that it does come at the end of the second century and Aristaeus is a Jew. If the translation of the Law is only part of the purpose of the Letter of Aristaeus, then the

problem still must be investigated further. What could be the purpose of this book and why was it couched in the language of a panegyric? For this we must look to the character of the Alexandrian Greek community.

NOTES - CHAPTER II

1. Philo, De. Nobilitate, 195.
2. Cf. Graets as quoted by Andrews in Charles, p. 85.
3. Hadas, Aristeas to Philocrates, p. 171f.
4. Cf. Aristobolus as quoted by Swete, Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek, par. 12, p. 18.
5. Charles, op. cit. p. 83.
6. Thackeray, Letter of Aristeas, p. 116.
7. Hadas, op. cit., p. 7.
8. Swete, op. cit., p. 19.
9. Tcherikover, Ideology of the Letter of Aristeas, Harvard Theological Review LI, 1958, p. 68.
10. Thackeray, Text of Letter of Aristeas, p. ix.
11. Cited by Hadas, op. cit., p. 170f.
12. Thackeray, op. cit., p. ix.
13. Hadas, op. cit., p. 279f.
14. Tertullian, Apology 18.
15. Thackeray, op. cit., p. ix.
16. Hadas, op. cit., p. 216f.
17. Exodus 25:24.
18. Exodus 37:11.
19. Hadas, op. cit., p. 123f.
20. Deuteronomy 13:7.
21. Charles, op. cit., p. 84.
22. Praep. Evan. 9:25, p. 430c.

23. Excerpt from "Of the Jews."
24. Hadas, op. cit., p. 4.
25. Abrahams, Letter of Aristaeas, p. 9.
26. Ibid., p. 10.
27. Hadas, op. cit., p. 5.
28. Wolfson, Philo I, p. 16.
29. Charles, op. cit., p. 87.
30. Swete, op. cit., p. 10.
31. Charles, op. cit., p. 85.
32. Exodus 9:3.
33. Proep, Evang. 8:10, p. 377a.
34. Hadas, op. cit., p. 9.
35. Thackeray, op. cit., p. xiii.
36. Philo, De Vita Mosia, 2:25-44.
37. Charles, op. cit., p. 86.
38. Hadas, op. cit., p. 116.
39. Ibid., p. 10.
40. This is an excerpt from the prologue to Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Ben Sirach. By the language of this short section, we deduct that it was written at a later date by the grandson of the author.
41. Bevan, A History of Egypt, p. 285.
42. From Prologue to Ben Sirach.
43. Kahle, The Cairo Geniza, p. 217.
44. Ibid., p. 218.
45. Tcherikover, op. cit., p. 76.
46. Kahle, op. cit., p. 211.
47. Ibid., p. 211.
48. Sterling Tracy, III Maccabees and Pseudo-Aristaeas, A Study, Yale Classical Studies I, 1928, p. 241.

CHAPTER III

The Letter of Aristaeas is basically a Greek book written in the Greek canon of form. Hadas feels that the book was not, "like other books on the periphery of Scripture with which they have been associated, translations from the Hebrew or Aramaic, nor does it follow the forms of such works. It is what would be called a proto-gymnastia or curriculum of the rhetoricians a narratio."¹

There was according to the Hellenistic historian three categories of truth. There were true history, pseudo-history, and ^{writing} similar to true history. The latter was also called plasmaia because with it the author was able to bend and develop his thesis according to some historical ideas. The first two categories would apply to that which is literally true or wholly imaginary; but the third to an imaginative treatment of history which should however preserve historical truth and present a higher 'poetical' truth.² It would be the same idea as Aristotle's dictum that poetry is truer than history.³

Effectiveness as edifying propaganda seems to be the object of such historical reporting, and "was the basis of the rules for narrative composition followed by self-conscious letterateurs of the Hellenistic age."⁴ By these standards then the plasmaia must have their basis in truth or actual historical events but admit of elaborations provided they have verisimilitude and help to edify the ideas of the author. "Eventually the historical element was reduced to a mere background for any kind of story which preempted the foreground."⁵

and at the same time kept the form of history.

If Hody had had this idea in mind when he interpreted the Letter of Aristeeas, he may have had a change of heart about its total rejection as history. That the author used many false impressions and historical anachronisms in the formulation of his story may have only been his manner of trying to impress his point upon the reader. "By Hellenistic standards the author of Aristeeas was a conscientious workman, trying to make his kernel of truth as edifying as possible, and one of the recognized ways of making a story effective was to associate it with some great name."⁶ If this point is kept in mind it could be the reason for the author to have chosen Ptolemy II Philadelphus as his hero. The fact that he did not get along with Demetrius and had him banished would not be a deterrent to the author. Both men were alive at the time he wished to set his history and he made use of both great names.

The problem then comes down to the basis of intent. Was the translation of the Law or the Bible into Greek the primary purpose of the Letter of Aristeeas or was there another reason for the writer to write in this poetical historical manner? It is almost certain that the Letter of Aristeeas survived because it was an important witness to the Bible, and other like documents disappeared because no one had the concern to preserve them. The picking up of excerpts from the body, or the reference to the tale from Philo and Josephus through the Church Fathers certainly caused the text to be remembered where other books of the same period were tossed aside and forgotten

because they lacked the relevance to a notable historical event such as the translation of the Law. But this cannot and does not explain the intent of the author. It only explains the intent and purpose that was read into the book by later historians and theologians.

Perhaps a more careful analysis of the text is in order to explain the propaganda aims and intent of the book more completely. The fact that so much is made of the section dealing with the banquets and the kings questioning the guests could give us more insight into the letter as a whole. If it were for the purpose of the translation alone that this tale was written, we would still be faced with the question of why the major portion of the document deals with events almost totally unrelated to the purpose ascribed by all the later historians.

In his investigation of the Greek world in India, W. W. Tarn discovered a work that was very similar in form and intent to this very section of the Letter of Aristeeas.⁷ Despite the fact that Aristeeas is probably dated most correctly by those who place it at the end of the second century, Tarn believes that the banquet section is much older. He compares this section to an Indian work called the Milindapanha or Questions of Milinda. The identity of Milinda is that of King Menander who ruled in Greek India about the beginning of the second century. Curiously the man who brought Menander to India in the first place was a king Demetrius, bearing the same name as the one Aristeeas says was the librarian at Alexandria.⁸

Because this section is so similar to the one in the Letter of Aristaeus it would be useful to analyze it further. It is in the same form: the questioning of a sage and his answer. Tarn finds it quite significant that the questions in Aristaeus never mention Jewish religion or customs or even the Jewish people. And these questions were being asked of men who were supposed to be well versed in Jewish lore and tradition and lived in Jerusalem which was the center of the Jewish life of the world of Hellenistic times. There are some questions however that give some difficulty.

"He agreed with these words, and bade the sixth man answer the query, 'To whom should favor be shown?' That man responded, 'To parents always, for God has given the greatest commandment concerning honor to parents. Next He reckons the state of friendship, for He calls a friend the equal of man's soul. But you do well in turning all men to friendship to yourself.'" (228)

Some feel that the fifth commandment is the reference here, but Tarn points out that Aristophanes' Wasps also gives this as a Greek ideal. This is also given as a point in the writings of Plato.⁹

There is also a question and answer which hearken to the Bible but also predict New Testament thought.

"His response was 'by preserving equality and reminding himself at each turn that he is a man as well as a leader of men. And God humbles the proud, and the gentle human being he exalts.'" (263)¹¹

Hadas¹⁰ finds in this section an allusion to the Bible,¹¹ but he says that it is so general in sentiment that no specific allusion can be inferred or assumed. This was based on the belief that Thackeray had put forth earlier. But Tarn¹² finds that this line is centuries

earlier and comes from a different source. In fact he is of the opinion that this line is the direct link to quotations in the New Testament.¹³

From various other questions and answers in this section also there is more evidence to ponder regarding the Jewish origin. It is of interest to note that the gist of most of the questions put to the scholars are not about any specific Jewish problem or about any specific Jewish information. The king seems to have other matters on his mind. His questions are about himself and his own rule - the duties, privileges, ambitions of a king. He seems to sum it all up in just a few words after questioning the last man.

"For I have profited greatly by the doctrine which you have grounded for me with reference to kingship." (294)

He is not thanking the elders who came all the way from Jerusalem to tell him anything about the then practiced faith of the Jews but it is more the climax of a treatise on kingship.¹⁴ If this be so it would contradict the entire thesis that Aristaeus is in reality a Jew who is writing in a lightly disguised style so that those who read him would really believe him to be a Greek. Instead Tarn has found in the language another sort of anachronism. It is written in the style of a treatise on kingship or in the form of a symposium prevalent in the Greek world in the fourth and the third centuries. This section then would not only take us back to the time of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, but could possibly be earlier. At this time the Hellenistic kingships were very new in history, and the prevailing philosophy

worked hard in shaping the theory of this new phenomenon.¹⁵ The questions that are asked are full of the terminology of the matter: beneficence,¹⁶ equality,¹⁷ good feeling toward all men,¹⁸ and above all, philanthropia or the love of one's subjects,¹⁹ the last of which is considered so important.

"He commended him, and asked another, 'What is the most essential possession for a king?' 'Indulgence and love to his subject's was the response, 'for by these an indissoluble bond of good will arises. But it is God who brings it about that these things should come to pass as you would choose.'" (265)

He it is stated that this love is the most necessary possession of all for a king.

The tone of the section dealing with the banquet with its questions and answers caused Tarn to delve more deeply into the method of the symposium comparing it with the Milindapanha and here he finds a tremendous similarity. He believes from the literary form of this section of the Letter of Aristaeas along with the language used that it is of a much older date than the sections surrounding it, and is the work of a completely different author, taken bodily and edited by the writer of this document at the end of the first century where most critics seem to believe it belongs. He places this part of the work as being written in Bactria or India and making its way to Egypt where it might have come to the author of the Letter of Aristaeas, who saw in it a use of his own. He was writing a history and this symposium could be the agent whereby he could use the plasmata of his history to its greatest height.

One proof that Tarn gives for this early dating is found in the following verse:

"He expresses his agreement with this man, and asked the next how he might be free of error. He declared, 'By acting always with gravity and deliberation and not being persuaded by slanders but oneself testing what is said, and by administering questions of petitions with judgment and through judgment granting them, you will be free of error, Your Majesty. But to hold such convictions and to behave accordingly requires divine power.'" (252)

This question belongs to a time when the reigning Ptolemy was receiving petitions. This points to a date before the beginning of the second century because after this time special officials took care of petitions and none reached the king. This was not true during the third century.²⁰

In the Milindapanha there are seventy questions rather than the seventy-two of the Letter of Aristaeas. In this way there were ten questions a night instead of the eleven that were necessitated on the last two nights because of the two added members of the symposium. The author of the Letter of Aristaeas felt that he had to make this explanation because in one place he has in a parenthetic phrase "for there were two more than seventy." (272) This seems to be redundant in the text because earlier he had taken special pains to point out that there were seventy two elders and he also listed their names (46-51). The number seventy two does not exist in any other previous Hellenistic document and it is thought that this number was introduced to give some agreement with the reference to the seventy two elders appointed by Moses in the Bible.²¹

There seems to be however only one major difference between this document with its questions and those of the Milindapanha. The answers of all the Jewish Elders to everyone of the questions, save two, contains an additional clause in which the name of God is mentioned. In the two odd statements the term "Divine Law" is substituted. It is as though the three elders had changed the intent of the kingship symposium. They were making it clear how they differed from the Hellenistic World by making God their starting point. This is shown by the following verse which makes it inevitable that the Jews with their central authority of God could outrun the Greek philosophers.

"Then with a fuller voice the king greeted them all and spoke kindly to them, with the others present, especially the philosophers, joining in commendation. For in their conduct and discourse these men were far in advance of the philosophers, for they made their starting point from God. And after this the king proceeded to show his kindly feelings by drinking healths." (235)

Here the superiority of the Scripture oriented Jews to the philosophers is brought out dramatically. They state that God is the source of everything we know and everything we do. This is regardless of the questions put to them by Ptolemy or Demetrius.²² This is even echoed before in the words of Aristeeas where he states:

"Our lawgiver, then, in the first place laid down the principles of piety and justice and expounded them point by point, not alone by prohibitions but by commandments, and he made clear the discomfortures and visitations that would be inflicted by God upon the guilty." (131)

Here then was the basis of the ethical theory which the author was superimposing upon the words of another document. It is with this

ethical idea with God as the center that the author is differing from his source.

It is not necessary to go through the manifold steps that may have been the source of this banquet material in the Letter of Aristeeas. If it is, as it has been shown, a product of the third century, then how does it apply to Egypt of the end of the second century?

The two works, one from India and the other from Egypt, have shown some similarity. Both works are the same with the exception for the number of questions, and one is edited to add the divine origin of thought. Tarn believes that the author of the Letter of Aristeeas used Ptolemy because he knew that he may have had at one time some conversations with a similar group. He says, "We can now see that Aristeeas chose Ptolemy II as his protagonist because there was already in existence a document, the Questions of Ptolemy II, which made Ptolemy II converse with Jews; and the author of the Questions had chosen Ptolemy II because, for the Jewish world of that day, he was the greatest king of the time and the questions which had come from the East showed that it was proper for great kings to converse with foreign sages."²⁴ Whether these questions actually originated in the East is still conjecture, but there is enough textual evidence to show similarities of the two works. The symposium was not an uncommon form of literature of the time, but there seem to be greater variations between other works than between these two.

In the introduction to the Milindapanha there is also the exposition that we find in the Letter of Aristeeas. And there is

curiously another character who is called Demetrius. Tarn continues, "A copy of the Greek questions of Menander, written in India soon after Menander's death could have reached the library at Alexandria via Babylonia, the great clearing house between East and West, and it reached it in plenty of time for Aristaeus (c. 100 BCE) to read it; he was obviously interested in kings' questions, and would have read it had he found it. It looks as if it were the Greek Questions of Menander which gave him the idea of resurrecting Demetrius, the librarian, so that he might have a Demetrius to play the principle part in his own scene setting."²⁵

If this is the explanation of the document, we are investigating, then we must conclude that it is in effect really two works. First it is a series of questions and answers in the form of a symposium taken from an older source which in turn is taken from a still earlier source. This was not unusual in the Hellenistic world for we have the same thing in the Sibylline Oracles.²⁶ It was the custom of the times to use existing material. Second this symposium - like section is surrounded by another work which was written by the author to express some purpose or tendentiousness. It is a piece of propaganda writing, but it also is a type of propaganda that must be investigated to discover its intent.

Our sources are almost in complete agreement that the author of Aristaeus was a Jew who used thinly veiled language to indicate he was a noble in the court of Ptolemy II. But we have seen that by certain things he wrote, including the additions in the symposium section, that he was basically Jewishly oriented in a Greek world.

The Jews had lived in Egypt since the time of the Babylonian exile and there is reason to believe that the prophet Jeremiah was captured and taken there.²⁷ Later there is evidence shown by the Elephantine Papyri that there was a large Jewish settlement on the Nile. This settlement had mostly merchants and soldiers in its group. Still later at the time of Alexander, immigration started and Josephus gives some evidence of this immigration.²⁸ However, it is not until the time of Ptolemy I Soter that we have first hand evidence of the raids in Palestine and the bringing back to Egypt numerous Jewish prisoners. Soter made raids into Palestine from 320 to 301 BCE, and frequent intercourse remained between the two countries after that time. Evidence of the conquest and the disposition of the prisoners is given in the Letter of Aristaeus (12-14). It mentions that there were 100,000 Jews resettled in Egypt at that time and that they were essentially placed into military service "to fight in the army of Ptolemy against the king of the Ethiopians."

The settlements of the Jews were scattered all over Egypt. In Alexandria the Jewish population steadily increased so that at the beginning of the Roman period, two fifths of the city was inhabited by Jews.²⁹ Jews were not confined to their quarters and Jews dwelt everywhere so that synagogues were scattered all over the city.³⁰ The Jews did have a certain kind of autonomy in which they had control over their own community. This authority was known as the politeuma. This Jewish autonomous organization based its laws on the ancestral laws. Thus the Torah was the fundamental law of all

the Jewish communities in Egypt.³¹ Aristaeas gives us direct evidence of this politeuma.

"When the rolls had been read the priests and the elders of the translators and some of the corporate body and the leaders of the people rose up." (310)

The Jews served and worked everywhere. They were soldiers, policemen, farmers, state officials, artisans and merchants. The entire period from Ptolemy I Soter to Ptolemy VII, Philometer (146 BCE) is that of a slow establishment in this environment. From this time we find that there was an increase of Jewish immigration because Josephus states that "Philometer and Kleopatra, his wife, entrusted the whole of their realm to Jews."³²

Another important phase of this new settling was the process of the hellenization of the Jews. Greek was the new mother tongue. Hebrew had long since disappeared from Egypt although we see traces of it in the Elephantine Papyri.³³ We know that Aramaic was originally the principal language of the Jewish settlers. Jewish immigrants into Egypt in the Hellenistic age used Aramaic in their everyday life, though, of course, many of them knew some Hebrew as well. During the entire third century, and perhaps the first half of the second, Egyptian Jews continued to speak Aramaic. After this period no more documents are found in this language.³⁴ It is likely that Aramaic as a language of commerce was supplanted by the Greek. Since Aramaic was not the national language of the Jews, nor the language of the Bible, its replacement by Greek did not affect the national foundations of Jewish life, though it certainly changed its external aspect and diminished the differences between the Jewish and Greek modes of life.

It was in this Greek world of the Jew that the Letter of Aristaeas made its bow in the form that we know it. Tcherikover gives five reasons why this world was ripe for such literature.

1. In the second century BCE there were Jewish writers in Alexandria who wrote on Jewish subjects for the Jewish reader in Greek.

2. The Jew in Alexandria lived in a fairly free atmosphere and there was no evidence of anti-Semitic writings such as described by Josephus in Contra Apion. This literature reached its climax only at the end of the Hellenistic period and the beginning of the Roman period. Therefore, this cannot be an apologetic tract for the non-Jewish Egyptians.

3. Is it not possible to imagine that this glorification of Judaism could have found more favor and understanding in the heart of a Jew than it could have influenced a Greek reader?

4. The Greeks could not have been so naive to have been taken in by such a crude fiction and believe that it was a genuine Greek praising Judaism so highly. Also, the Greek pseudonym of Aristaeas does not exclude the possibility that the book was intended for the Jewish reader.

5. The author in verses 130-169 has Eleazar discuss the precepts of the Torah with such examples as "animals chewing the cud and parting the hoof." It is only the most esoteric things that the High Priest discusses here. It is more probable that the Jews would have concern over these things. The Greeks would more likely want to know about circumcision, the Sabbath, the main holidays, and the prohibition of pork. But Eleazar passes over these things in silence.

The Letter of Aristeas is written in the ordinary Greek language of the Hellenistic period and shows no influence of Semitic tongues.³⁵ In the narrative, and especially in the documents, one can trace the influence of the Ptolemaic offices. We may say that the author has perfect mastery of the Greek language, official as well as literary, and that he reveals a certain skill in narrating the various in a manner attractive to the reader. The ideas of Greek philosophers on ethics and politics are mainly reflected in the Symposium part of the letter. This symposium goes beyond all other symposia in its lack of poetic feeling and its dry didactic manner.³⁶ Meecham³⁷ finds this same attitude in the writing when he quotes, "It seems, to judge from extant works, that educated Hellenistic Jews cultivated the Greek language, and often employed a somewhat artificial academic style, with fondness for compound words, sometimes even making new compounds: this is true of Philo and Josephus, and doubtless true of other men. It was true of Aristeas. In accordance with the genius of literary Greek there is an absence of foreign words. The degree of culture in the author's language and style is difficult to appraise. Despite traces of vernacular in his Greek it is clear that Aristeas is far removed from the low cultural grade represented by the illiterate papyri. His affinities lie with the literary rather than the spoken Greek of his day."

It is also in the spirit of true Greek philosophy that the questions are asked. "What is philosophy?" (256) "Which is the highest rule?" (221) "How might (the king) be beyond outbursts of wrath?" (253)³⁸ Wolfson notes that these questions are rephrased

in the writings of Philo and they describe somewhat the double nature of man: an earthlike soul which contains the seat of desire and other irrational emotions and a spiritual soul which is the seat of reason acting as a restraint upon the emotions.³⁹ He also finds that the answer to verse 221, "To rule oneself and not be carried away by impulses," (222) is found in native Jewish tradition without the benefit of philosophic terminology.⁴⁰ It is the praise of the virtue of contentment. In rabbinic literature it can be found in the Mishna, "Who is mighty? He that subdues his desire. Who is rich? He that is contented with his portion."⁴¹

If one were however to stress the Jewish character of the questions and answers, he would find that the Law was not the source of the ideas that are expressed. They would be from books like Proverbs, Psalms, Daniel or the Apocryphal tracts, all of which seem to have been written in a period when Jewish literature was being influenced by Hellenism. Tohericover carries this idea further by stressing that "several passages in the symposium have no counterpart at all in Jewish literature. There is little doubt, therefore, that the Greek ideas in the symposium of Aristeas are drawn directly from the great stock of Hellenistic literature without Jewish intermediaries."⁴²

Aristeas has a favorable attitude toward the Greek education of the Jews. It is this fact from which the apologetic feature of the letter seems to have arisen. It was as if to say, "See what a worthy people these Jews are that so great a king as Philadelphus was their patron and friend."⁴³ This may be true but it seems that

the letter goes beyond the realm of true apologetics. There is more reverence on the part of the Greeks than just the fact of toleration of the Jews. The gifts that were sent to Jerusalem are the most precious ones in the Royal Treasury (80-81); the king received the elders immediately, although it was the Ptolemaic custom of the times to wait from five to thirty days (174-175), a holiday was declared (180), and the king prostrated himself seven times before the rolls of the Torah (177-178). Tcherikover⁴⁴ asks if this was meant for the consumption of the Greek world, and he answers in the negative. He believes that it was to influence the Jewish, not the Greek reader. "There is nothing that makes you love people more than the knowledge that they love you. Aristeeas' reader was expected to deduce from the king's and the courtiers' affectionate attitude toward Jews that he himself ought to develop an affection toward Greeks; to bring the Jews nearer to the Greeks in their culture --this was the aim of Aristeeas."⁴⁵

Aristeeas even has the answer to the religious differences of the Jews and the Greeks. He tries very hard to show that regardless of the difference of the practice of polytheism by the Greeks and monotheism by the Jews, there is basically no philosophic difference in the outlook of the two worlds. It can be bridged. This may explain the reason for the author's taking a Greek identity. This glorification of the Greek religion coming from a Jew would not impress the Jewish World. It could arouse hope in the Jewish heart to show that a Greek had some understanding and compassion for the faith of Moses. It is as though he was telling his fellow Jews to go out to meet the

Greeks half way. His attitude was that the Greeks of high education knew "that their gods were merely symbols. According to this theory, the gods were kings and heroes of ancient times whose various actions for the benefit of mankind earned them the honor due to gods."⁴⁶ It is in this same line of thought that a seemingly unimportant verse takes on very important implications.

"God, the overseer and creator of all things, whom they worship, is He whom all men worship, and we too, Your Majesty, though we address Him differently, as Zeus and Dis; by these names men of old not unsuitably signified that He through whom all creatures receive life and come into being is the guide and lord of all. Surpass all men, then, in magnanimity of spirit, and grant liberty to those oppressed in bondage." (16)

Does it not seem that Aristeeas is trying to tell the Jews that the Greek Zeus and the God of the Jews are one and the same? Only the names are different. While, with the example of Scripture before him, Aristeeas has no objection to describing God by general Greek terms for the gods,⁴⁷ here he also applies to God the proper name of the Greek deities. If Aristeeas in his letter is made to say that the God worshipped by the Jews is the same as that which the Greeks call Zeus, it is only because he is presented as a non-Jew and a Stoic philosopher to whom Zeus meant the same as the God worshipped by the Jews.⁴⁸

How the Greek and the Jewish thought begin to mingle is brought out clearer by Aristeeas. He is still basically a person who was trying to preserve Judaism from any alien attack, and in order to do this he had to show how it was similar to Greek thought

in order to surround it with a wall of ideas that would withstand the battering of foreign attack. This he did through the use of allegory which reaches its highest level in the writings of Philo. He sees the Mosaic Law as allegories given in symbolic manner. This seems to be the essence of the entire section devoted to Eleazar's dissertation (128 sqq.) In fact he even spells this idea out.

"All the regulations concerning what is permissible with reference to these and other creatures, then, he has set forth by way of allegory." (150)

Here he gives the philosophic reason for the food laws. And these laws are based on "right reason" (161). And he even tells what this is. Paraphrased it is that the fowls which eat grain are pure, whereas the forbidden ones are kinds of prey. Hence "the Lawgiver has commended to men of understanding a symbol that they must be just and achieve nothing by violence" nor must they oppress others. (147-148)

It is with this symbolic meaning that Aristean looks at the whole Torah. While it has a profound meaning, the addition of Greek thought to impress allegory on the Scriptural text gives the "right reason." It turns Torah from something for the Jews exclusively to a universal doctrine, especially those who had a Greek education. "The Torah ought to be imbued with Greek philosophy and the teaching of Moses ought to adapt itself to the school of Plato. Then, and only then, could Moses be accepted by the educated Alexandrian Jew as a Lawgiver and prophet."⁴⁹

And this was the importance of the Greek language. Aristean already had had Demetrius say of the Torah:

"Translation is required; in the country of the Jews they use a peculiar script, just as the Egyptians employ their arrangement of letters and they have their own language." (11)

And later:

"It happens that they are written in Hebrew characters and in the Hebrew tongue, and they have been committed to writing somewhat carelessly and not adequately, according to the testimony of experts, for they have never benefitted by a king's forethought" (30)

Here is the raison d'être for the translation. Greek is the universal language and the language whereby the correct thought can best be transmitted to the people. The Greek will not have the imperfections of the original Hebrew. And he must use the whole symposium to show how Greek thought and Hebrew Law are synonymous. The Law is said to be of sacred and divine origin and the books of the Law are described as logia of God, the oracles of God.⁵⁰ It is as well as the Greek language is what must be used to preserve the sanctity and truth of the Torah. It is as though through this means the whole translation is given the same holiness as Moses' receiving the Law on Mt. Sinai. Philadelphus intimated this in his letter of introduction to Eleazar when he said:

"Now since we desire to show favor to these (Egyptian Jews) and to all the Jews in the world and to their posterity we have resolved that your Law should be translated into Greek writing from the Hebrew tongue in use among you," (38)

What is so special about the Law that Philadelphus should seek favor? It is as Tcherikover feels that "from now on the Jews would not need

the Hebrew language any more, even in their religious service: Greek the language of the king and the state would serve all their spiritual needs and there would be no language barrier between the Jews and the Greeks. The Greeks would be able to read the Bible and to realize how sublime are its ideas and how high is the culture of the Jewish nation, chosen by God to receive the Torah. The Torah in Greek would serve the Jews as a ticket of admission to Greek culture and Greek society.⁵¹ Here was the ticket of true emancipation for the Jew in a foreign society. He could have his Law and his religious practice. He could also have the culture of his adopted surroundings without having to give up his birthright. He was now both Greek and Jew. How were the two so different if they could be reconciled through "right reason"? At the same time Aristeeas shows through the use of the Greek symposium the advantage the Jews have by being better and having a greater intellectual capacity than the barbarians.

The Greek Bible could be read by everyone, and everyone could convince himself of the depth and truth of the religious and moral ideas of the Jewish lawgiver, Moses, and the importance of the people to whom such precepts had been given. The Bible was not a barbarian book, and it was now the possession of the entire civilized world. This is all the more reason why Jews had to adhere to its tenets.

"When therefore our lawgiver, equipped by God for insight into all things, had surveyed each particular, he fenced us about with impregnable palisades and with walls of iron, to the end that we should mingle in no way with any of the other nations, remaining pure in body and in spirit, emancipated from vain opinions, revering the one and mighty God above the whole of creation." (139)

Rather than assimilation this is a eulogy to Judaism. "Not assimilation among the Gentiles is Aristeeas' aspiration, but the opening of a world of culture before Jews and Judaism."⁵²

The entire Letter of Aristeeas is a mystifying one. We do not know its author or the date of its writing. We can only guess. It seems to be the work of a Jew of the end of the second century BCE writing an apology or a polemic. Its intent is also lost in the passing of time and again we must look to the text and the confusing historical events to make some estimation of it. But we do know it is Hellenistic and it tries to give us the reason for the correctness of the translation of the Hebrew Law into Greek. There is also reason to believe that it is a composite of ideas, language and method.

Tcherikover sums the book up quite succinctly.

"The Letter of Aristeeas appears as a typical work of Alexandrian Jewry in the Ptolemaic period. There is no unity in the work, as there was no unity either in the heart of the author or in the social class to which he belonged. Like most of the people who strive to be 'citizens of two worlds,' Aristeeas did not actually belong to either of them. It is difficult to class Aristeeas among the nationalist Jews; his Judaism is pale and colorless, imbued with foreign influences, and it lacks the inner warmth of a genuine national feeling. Even less does Aristeeas belong to the Hellenes. His aspirations to be like the Greeks only emphasize the great distance between him and the *kaloi kagathoi* of the true Greek intelligentsia. But it is precisely this duality which is most important for the scholar studying the cultural aspect of Hellenistic Jewry. Aristeeas wanted to write history, but in fact he depicted his own times. Aristeeas' small book serves as one of the most important sources for the study of the spirit of Alexandrian Jewry in the Ptolemaic period, when anti-semitism had not yet blocked the way to cultural emancipation before the Egyptian Jew, and the life of the Jewish nation in Egypt appeared to be tranquil and safe." 53

These are a few of the many historical and literary aspects of The Letter of Aristeas. There are many more facets to be explored. One of the more pressing is the relationship of this book with the Jews in Palestine under the Selucids. In Aristeas there are only hints of this historic period and locale. Its influence on the Septuagint has been very well documented and has been the goal of scholarly research for many years. There is much to be unravelled yet in the myriads of contradictions and anachronisms in its text. The influence of anti-semitism in Egypt is also a field of endeavor to be explored. So far there have been only references and guesses. As this whole period of history becomes better known, perhaps the Letter of Aristeas can be studied with more assurance. It is a hope. Perhaps something new will turn up which will turn conjecture to reality.

NOTES - CHAPTER III

1. Hadas, Aristeas and III Maccabees, Harvard Theological Review, XLII, 1948, p. 175.
2. See note to reference above.
3. Aristotle, Poetics 1451 B.
4. Hadas, Hellenistic Culture, p. 120.
5. Ibid., p. 121.
6. Ibid., p. 121.
7. Tarn, Excursus to Greeks in Bactria and India. This section is an appendix to the history to show how Greek thought penetrated the Buddhist world as it penetrated the world of the Jew. This article gives many interesting sidelights to the entire communication system in the Asian and Middle Eastern world after the conquests of Alexander.
8. Ibid., p. 134.
9. Plato, Laws, 4, 717 B.
10. Hadas, Aristeas to Philocrites, p. 203 f.
11. I Samuel 2:7.
12. Tarn, op. cit., p. 426.
13. It is interesting to compare some of the remarks in the symposium to both Old Testament and New Testament sayings. This section is very much like James 1:6 and I Peter 5:5. It has the same idea as the I Samuel selection, but it seems farther from the meaning even though the words may be similar.
14. Goodenough, Hellenistic Kingship, Yale Classical Studies I, 1928.
15. Tarn, op. cit., p. 426.
16. Verses 190, 205, 210, 249, 281.
17. Verses 188, 192, 207, 211, 263, 290.
18. Verses 225, 228.
19. Verses 208, 257, 265, 290.

20. cf. Tarn, op. cit., p. 427 and Hadas, op. cit., p. 199 f.
21. The number seventy-two plays an important part in Jewish literature. For an explanation see Thackeray, Text of the Letter of Aristaeas, p. xviii. The number is also found in Exodus 24:1, 19 and in Mishna Sanhedrin I.
22. Wolfson, Philo I, p. 27.
23. Tarn, op. cit., p. 432.
24. Ibid.
25. Tarn, op. cit., p. 434.
26. Lancaster in Charles, op. cit., p. 369.
27. Jeremiah 44:1, 9.
28. Josephus, Wars 2:487 and Against Apion 2:35, 42.
29. Philo, Contra Flaccus, 55.
30. Ibid.
31. Tcherikover, Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum, I, p. 7.
32. Philo, Contra Flaccus, 2:49.
33. Tcherikover, op. cit., p. 30.
34. Ibid.
35. Keesche, The Letter of Aristaeas, p. 43.
36. Tcherikover, op. cit., p. 64.
37. Keesche, op. cit., p. 311. Here he is quoting from Tarn in International Journal of Apocrypha, July 1907, p. 3.
38. Tcherikover, Ideology of the Letter of Aristaeas, p. 65.
39. Wolfson, Philo II, p. 290.
40. Ibid., II, p. 236.
41. Pirke Avoth IV, 1.
42. Tcherikover, op. cit., p. 66. This modifies the former ideas of Tarn.

43. Tracy, op. cit., p. 250.
44. Tcherikover, op. cit., p. 68.
45. Ibid.
46. Ibid., p. 69.
47. viz: Zeus and Dis
48. Wolfson, Philo, I, p. 15.
49. Tcherikover, op. cit., p. 73.
50. Wolfson, Philo I, p. 30.
51. Tcherikover, op. cit., p. 77. This is similar to what Moses Mendelssohn did in eighteenth century Germany. Whether an analogy can be drawn is argumentative and open to conjecture.
52. Ibid.
53. Ibid., p. 84-85.

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