

PART I

From Alexander and the Successors
to the Religious Persecutions
of Antiochus Epiphanes
(333–168 B.C.E.)

This page intentionally left blank

Theophrastus on Jewish Sacrificial Practices and the Jews as a Community of Philosophers

Theophrastus was the first of the four Greek authors of the early Hellenistic period to write on the Jews.¹ He was born in Eresus on the island of Lesbos in the late seventies of the fourth century B.C.E., and was to spend some decades of his life in the company of Aristotle, first in Assos on the northwest coast of Asia Minor, then in the Macedonian court at Stagira in Chalcidice, and finally in Athens. When Aristotle died in 322, Theophrastus was left as head of the Peripatetic school in Athens, and he lived on there, apart from two years spent in exile in Chalcis, until his death (c. 288). His writings included a great number of works and lecture notes on a wide variety of subjects in philosophy and sci-

1. There has been some controversy about whether Theophrastus's passage on the Jews preceded the Jewish excursus of Hecataeus. Stern (1973) proved that Theophrastus was not familiar with the Jewish excursus of Hecataeus (against the view of Jaeger [1938b] 142 ff.; Murray [1973] 163–68 et al.). Stern's comment (162) is worth quoting: "Hecataeus is much more in keeping with the real Jewish situation, as would befit a later composition, and an author who, it seems, knew the Jewish people better than Theophrastus. In Hecataeus, the Jewish people appears as a separate group, with a stable political order, and not as a strange sect of Syrian philosophers, as would be the impression given by the earlier account of Theophrastus." The evidence appears to indicate that the work was composed in the years 319–315/4 B.C.E.; see Pötscher (1964) 124; Stern (1973); Murray (1973) 167. On the composition of Hecataeus's *Aegyptiaca*, in which the Jewish excursus was included, in the years 305–302 B.C.E., see Bar-Kochva (1996d) 15–16.

ence. A number of these works have reached us intact, most notably *Enquiry into Plants* and *On the Causes of Plants* (on the geography and the physiology of plants, respectively). Preserved smaller works include *On Stones*, *On Fire*, *On Winds*, *On Odors*, and *Characters*, a collection of sketches of negative characters such as misers and flatterers and the like. In addition to these treatises, a large portion of Theophrastus's *Metaphysics* has survived, together with fragments of other works, some quite long, and testimonia concerning these and other works. Theophrastus has been regarded essentially as a link connecting classical Greek thought and science with their Hellenistic counterparts, although it must be said that in certain fields his own original contribution was considerable, particularly in his capacity as the "father of botany."²

INFORMATION ON JEWS,
AND THE WORK *PERI EUSEBEIAS*

Theophrastus's remarks on the Jews do not present a real ethnographic account. They are concentrated in a passage within a long fragment taken from his work *Peri eusebeias*. The passage concerns Jewish sacrificial practice, and it calls the Jews "philosophers by descent," attributing to them a number of characteristics: a preoccupation with theological discussions, stargazing, and prayer. At the same time, there is no reference to the Jews where one might have been expected. Theophrastus's botanical-geographical work, *Enquiry into Plants*, contains a scattering of descriptions of, and references to, the peculiar plant life of the area around Jericho, which in his time was included in the territory of Judaea. However, he mentions neither the Jews nor Judaea, and not even Jericho, making do instead with general geographical terms such as "Syria," "Koile Syria," and "the Valley of Syria."³ In his other botanical work, the *Aetiology of Plants*, Theophrastus describes the Ascalon onion (7. 4. 7–9; cf. Strabo 16. 2. 29) without indicating the location of Ascalon.

In light of what we know about Theophrastus's life, it is unlikely that he had contacts with Jews or an opportunity for a real dialogue with them. There are no indications that he ever visited the lands of the Orient, or even Egypt,⁴ and certainly not Judaea or Koile Syria. In his work *On Laws*, which surveyed the

2. On the life of Theophrastus, see Diogenes Laertius 5. 36–57 and the testimonia collected in Fortenbaugh et al. (1992) 1: 20–90; see also Regenbogen (1948) 1357–62; Sollenberger (1985) 61–62. On the extent of Theophrastus's influence and originality much has been written; see the articles by Sorabji, Betogazura, Gottschalk, Glucker, Sedley, and Long in Ophuijsen and Raalte (1998) 203–384.

3. On the flora around Jericho: Theophrastus *Enquiry into Plants* 2. 6. 2, 5, 8; 4. 4. 14; 9. 6. 1–4.

4. The notion that Theophrastus visited Egypt and Cyrene was widely held for many years in the research literature; see esp. Capelle (1956) 173 ff. It has been refuted by Fraser (1994) 169–81, esp. 180.

laws of both Greeks and barbarians (according to Cic. *Fin.* 5. 11),⁵ nothing was said about the laws of the Jews or Moses.⁶ Theophrastus also wrote a work in three books on “lawgivers” (*nomothetai*—Diog. Laert. 5. 45). Had there been any reference to Moses and his laws in that work, it would surely have been mentioned in some way by Jewish Hellenistic or Christian authors, especially Josephus, Eusebius, and Clement of Alexandria, whose reading, taken together, certainly encompassed the whole of Greek literature. Accordingly, the possibility that Theophrastus had direct contacts with Jews seems even more remote. At the most, Theophrastus may have heard something about the Jews, orally or from letters of veterans of Alexander’s campaigns, tourists, and sailors who had traveled about in the Orient,⁷ or from Greeks who had visited Egypt during the governorship of Ptolemy, son of Lagos. It was from such sources that he had been informed about the vegetation in the lower Jordan Valley, had he not found it in a written source.⁸

Theophrastus’s remarks concerning the Jews were included in his work *Peri eusebeias*. The treatise dealt with the question of proper cultic practice worthy of the gods, and the title might best be understood as *On the Right Way to Respect the Gods*, effectively *On Proper Cultic Practice*,⁹ and not *On Piety*, as it is frequently translated. It was composed some time between 319 and 315/4 B.C.E., apparently as an informal literary response to the charge of *asebeia* (lack of respect for the gods

5. Noted by Bickerman (1988) 15. Cicero does not name the work, and it seems that out of the four works by Theophrastus on laws (Diog. Laert. 5. 44–45), the one called *On Laws* is meant.

6. Josephus (*Ap.* 1. 167) states that Theophrastus in his *On Laws* mentioned the Hebrew word *qorban* (sacrifice) in connection with the Tyrian laws prohibiting the use of the oaths of foreigners. Josephus explains that the Jewish sacrifice is intended. The fact that this trivial and mistaken statement is the only one imported by Josephus from Theophrastus in his efforts to find references to the Jews in Greek literature suggests that Theophrastus’s *On Laws* included nothing about Jewish laws. For the many testimonia on *On Laws*, see Fortenbaugh et al. (1992) 2: 442. Josephus did not know anything about the passage on the Jews in *Peri eusebeias*.

7. So Bernays (1866) 111.

8. See notes 54 and 55 below on Theophrastus’s sources about Egypt. It has been speculated that on his expedition Alexander took with him a group of scientists who, among other things, conducted a botanical survey of the conquered lands and sent the collected information both to the Lyceum in Athens, seat of the Peripatetics, and to a “research center” established in Babylon: see Bretzl (1903) 30–67; Pfister (1961) 39–67; see, however, the skeptical approach of Fraser (1994) 174 ff.

9. *Sebomai* originally meant “respect something exalted,” such as gods, the king, or parents; the etymological meaning of *eusebeia*, a word that came to have many definitions in Greek philosophy, was thus “the paying of proper respect and reverence.” Pötscher (1964) 127–28 argues that the definition of *eusebeia* preserved by John Stobaeus, the fifth-century c.e. doxographer, reflects the opinion of Theophrastus: Εὐσεβείαν μὲν οὖν εἶναι ἕξιν θεῶν καὶ δαιμόνων θεραπευτικὴν, μεταξὺ οὐσαν ἀθεότητος καὶ δεισιδαιμονίας (“*Eusebeia* is a habitual state of administering to the gods and *daimones*, intermediate between atheism and superstition,” *Flor.* 2. 147). The terminology and presentation are certainly Peripatetic, and the definition may possibly originate with Theophrastus.

expressed in the performance of cultic duties) for which Theophrastus was put on trial in Athens (Diog. Laert. 5. 37).¹⁰ Within this context, Theophrastus advocated modest and thrifty cultic practice and abstention from animal sacrifice (supporting, indeed, vegetarianism). In order to consolidate his moral (and legal) arguments, Theophrastus attempted to prove that animal sacrifice was not something desired by the gods. This he did in part by offering a comprehensive anthropological theory concerning the development of human dietary habits from their very beginning, and the development of sacrifice to the gods arising from those eating habits.¹¹ It is in this context that his passage on the Jews appears.

Theophrastus's *Peri eusebeias* has not come down to us, but long extracts from it have been preserved in the second book of *περὶ ἀποχῆς ἐμψύχων* (*On Abstention from [the Meat of] Animals*) by the third-century C.E. Neoplatonist Porphyry of Tyre. The attribution of these extracts to Theophrastus is based essentially on a number of explicit references in Porphyry's work, which has come down to us in its entirety. This was corroborated with a detailed argument by the celebrated German-Jewish philologist Jacob Bernays in an 1866 monograph in which major parts of *Peri eusebeias* are reconstructed and their content interpreted.¹² The passage on the Jews is included in one of the two main extracts made by Porphyry (2. 26. 1–4). A full if indirect quotation (via Porphyry) from Theophrastus's account of the Jews is also to be found in Eusebius (*PE* 9. 2. 1) and is of some use in determining the formulation of the original.¹³

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY

Theophrastus, then, refers to the Jews during his exposition of the development of human dietary and sacrificial habits. It is worthwhile to begin, therefore, with a brief survey of his anthropological theory. Porphyry did not preserve the whole account of Theophrastus, nor do the surviving Theophrastean fragments provide a complete and consistent picture; moreover, the omission of sentences and even

10. On the dating of the work, see above, note 1. On the prosecution brought by Agnonides, Theophrastus's trial, and acquittal, and on the fate of the prosecutor, see the discussion and bibliography in Regenbogen, "Theophrastos," *RE* suppl. 7 (1948) cols. 1359–60.

11. On the general background to the development of such theories, see Uxkull-Gyllenband (1924); Haussleiter (1935); Dierauer (1977); Sorabji (1993). On additional aspects: Cole (1967) 15–46; Feldman (1968b); Brink (1956) 123–45; Drodge (1989) 108–10. See also Sorabji in Ophuijsen and Raalte (1998) 211–21, on the philosophical background.

12. Versions and editions of the text: Bernays (1866) 40 ff.; Nauck (1886) 155–56; Pötscher (1964) 146–86; Bouffartigue and Patillon (1979) 2: 92–93; Fortenbaugh et al. (1992) 2: 405–37. The main parts of Theophrastus's account are concentrated in three sections of Porphyry: 1. 5–9. 2; 11. 3–15. 1; 19. 4–32. 3. On attempts to find additional remains of the book, see Fortenbaugh (1984) 263–67.

13. The text is in Mras (1982) 8: 486.

passages from the fragments is evident.¹⁴ Porphyry himself states explicitly that he recorded only the main points and omitted, for instance, various examples drawn by Theophrastus from many peoples (2. 20. 2; 32. 3). It is therefore necessary to supplement some missing points in order to understand the theory as a whole, and thus clarify the role of the Jews in it. This should be done in accordance with the logic and spirit of the rest of the account, and with the aid of probable parallels.¹⁵

Theophrastus distinguishes between two stages in the development of diet and cult: the vegetarian and the meat-eating stages. The distinction itself, the chronological priority of the vegetarian stage, and the various elements of the first stage, are not particularly original, based as they are, essentially, on various versions of the myth of the Golden Age, with certain adaptations.¹⁶ There are, however, no known real parallels to the sequence of events of the carnivorous period as it appears in his version.

The development in the first stage is described as follows. In the far distant past,¹⁷ humans ate only plants, proceeding from wild plants to agricultural crops. The Egyptians, the wisest of humans, were the first to sacrifice to the gods (2. 5. 1). Other peoples followed suit. First produce of the season was deemed appropriate to please the gods, and the sacrifice changed with the natural and agricultural development of the types of crops. At first, when there were only wild grasses to eat, they sacrificed their roots and shoots (2. 5. 2). With the appearance of oak trees, men sacrificed a few acorns and many leaves (5. 6). Upon the arrival of fruit trees, they sacrificed fruit. With the development of agriculture, they sacrificed barley and wheat, initially only shoots and seeds, but later also ground corn and cakes (6. 2). At the same time there developed libation rituals: water at first (20. 3); then, by stages, honey, wine, and oil. All these were burnt completely, in honor of the gods (5. 3; 6. 2, 4), the heavenly bodies (5. 1), as a way of imbuing these gifts

14. See notes 19, 49, and p. 33 below.

15. For discussions on the vegetarian period and the development of the eating of flesh according to Theophrastus, see Haussleiter (1935) 237–45; Guttman 1: 75–78; Dürhauer (1977) 173–77; Obbink (1988) 275–77; Sorabji (1993) 173–75. The survey below differs in various details from these discussions.

16. See the survey of Greek and Roman materials in Haussleiter (1935) 54–79. The most detailed and interesting of these are Hesiod *Works and Days* 108–201 (esp. line 118—the land produces an abundance of crops *automatē*); Prodicus in Sextus Empiricus *Adversus mathematicos* 9. 18; Ovid *Metamorphoses* 1. 101–12, 15. 96–142; *Fasti* 1. 337 ff. Cf. Plato *Republica* 372b ff.; *Politicus* 272a; and the interesting version of Dicaearchus, one of the most prominent pupils of Aristotle (preserved in Porph. *Abst.* 4. 2), which emphasizes abstention from the killing of animals.

17. On the question of the chronology in light of Theophrastus's view of periodic cosmic disasters that destroyed flora and fauna, see Bernays (1866) 44–51; Fortenbaugh et al. (1992) 2: 272–74; Obbink (1988) 274–75.

with a degree of permanence; fire was considered to resemble most closely the immortal heavenly bodies (5. 2).

Why or when did humans begin to sacrifice animals? On this point there is some disagreement (9. 1). It appears that the turning point occurred at different times in different places, and not always for the same reason. It was believed to have happened mostly because of famine (9. 1; 27. 1), but it could also be caused by other disasters (9. 1), especially wars (7. 2; 12. 1; 22. 1). In some places (such as Athens), it resulted from superstitions, anger, or fear, or an unfortunate coincidence (9. 1–2). The sequence of events from famine to animal sacrifice is elaborated in the passage following the account of Jewish sacrificial practices (27. 1ff.), and unlike the survey of the first stage, it may well have derived at least partly from Theophrastus's own imagination. According to him, humans incurred the wrath of the gods because of their neglect of proper cultic respect. They were punished as a result, by being deprived of their customary means of existence. As they could no longer find plants upon which to feed, they were obliged to begin to eat each other. In an effort to appease the gods, men also began to offer human sacrifice. This custom has survived until this very day in certain places but over the course of time has generally been replaced by animal sacrifice. The new form of sacrifice encouraged humans to begin eating animal flesh as part of the sacrifice ritual, and gradually it came to be a common practice separate from the ritual as well. Humans continued sacrificing and eating animals even when the famine was over and crops were to be had in plenty.¹⁸

In the passages that have been preserved, Theophrastus does not offer a similarly detailed account of the development of animal sacrifice as a result of war.¹⁹ The preserved account of the development of this custom from other circumstances mentioned above (2. 9. 2, 29–30) does not affect our discussion, and so may be left to one side. I shall return to the “famine” version in due course, referring to it as “the main version.”

Theophrastus was opposed to the eating and sacrificing of animals on moral

18. Some links in the anthropological theory are also suggested by modern anthropologists (cannibalism-human sacrifice-animal sacrifice). See, e.g., Meek (1931) 2: 57; Sagan (1974) 52–53; and *contra*: Harris (1977) 5 ff. Putting plant-eating before flesh-eating is typical in myths of the Golden Age. An opposing view, that cannibalism preceded vegetarianism, appeared in Hecataeus of Abdera (in Diod. 1. 14. 1).

19. An abbreviated remnant of this chain of events, taken from Theophrastus, is to be found in Porphyry *On Abstinence* 2. 7. 2: During the wars, humans came into contact with blood (αἱμάτων ἦψαντο) and declared it good to sacrifice humans and animals and to eat their flesh. The passage has been shortened by Porphyry, and this has led to a certain lack of clarity. According to the following paragraph (7. 3), the tribes who had begun to perform cruel sacrifices as a result of the wars were punished by the gods with extinction. In the “famine” version, however, the famine itself is the punishment.

grounds (esp. 2. 12. 2–4; 24. 2–5; 25): such acts deprive animals of their soul, that part of animals and humans by which they belong to the same category of living beings;²⁰ these acts are performed by force, against the will of the animals; in addition, the animals brought to the altar are not the sort to endanger man or cause him any harm. Indeed, most are actually beneficial, and killing them demonstrates ingratitude; finally, man offers up to the gods a gift that is not his to give. On all these and other counts, animal sacrifice is deemed to be extremely unjust and cruel. The anthropological theory presented above was intended to show that animal sacrifice was nothing more than a substitute for a cruel practice—human sacrifice—which itself originated in a particularly despicable custom—cannibalism—the “necessity” of which was only temporary (during the time of famine). The eating of animals is the result of a development that has little to do with the real dietary needs of human beings in the present. Eating and sacrificing animals must be regarded as not only immoral but also quite unnecessary in the present circumstances where plant life is once again flourishing. Proof of this is the fact that early man lived on plants alone and had no need for meat supplements.

There was nothing new in this advocacy for vegetarianism. Orphics and Pythagoreans (or rather their *akousmatikoi*) had long abstained from eating meat and sacrificing animals because of their belief in the transmigration of souls. They were not alone: Greek poets and philosophers who depicted the Golden Age as a period of vegetarianism were thereby expressing their desire to “return” to vegetarianism in the present.²¹ Theophrastus’s contribution was the presentation of a coherent anthropological picture in the guise of a historical-practical proof, and the raising of some new moral arguments.

20. See esp. 2. 12. 3–4, and cf. 3. 25. The latter passage expands on those features common to all members of the human race, before moving on to the features common to humans and animals, because of which, violence against animals turns out to be unjust. The passage is explicitly attributed by Porphyry to Theophrastus, but which work is not specified. Fortenbaugh et al. (1992) 2. 350–52 include this passage not in their collection of fragments from *Peri eusebeias*, but in the category of “Ethics,” without indicating a particular work (no. 531). This is presumably because the beginning of the passage dealing with humans could have been included in another work by Theophrastus. Bernays (1886) 96 ff. does consider it to be from *Peri eusebeias*, as does Pötscher (1964) 182–83. The reasons Bernays offers for not including the passage in Theophrastus’s work *περί ζώων φρονήσεως καὶ ἤθους* (On the Soundmindedness and Character of Animals”) are not decisive. The ideas expressed in the passage could have appeared both in that work and in *Peri eusebeias*. On the question of the moral arguments of Theophrastus and their degree of consistency, see Fortenbaugh et al. (1992) 2: 267–71; Amir (1996) 113 ff. Note that Porphyry (*Abst.* 2. 21) indicates that Theophrastus (2. 21. 1–4) quotes Empedocles (D-K 31 B 128, l. 9), who describes a time when men regarded the sacrifice of animals as the greatest abomination. Empedocles seems to have believed in the transmigration of souls, from plants to animals to humans (e.g., Diog. Laert. 8. 77).

21. E.g., Empedocles in Porphyry *On Abstinence* 2. 20 (= D-K 31 B 128); Plato *Politicus* 272b–c. On later Greek and Latin authors, see the discussion in Hausleiter (1935) 54–78.

THE PASSAGE ON THE JEWS AND ITS CONTEXT

Theophrastus's passage on the Jews (2. 26) appears at the beginning of the main version (the "famine" version) of the account describing the process by which man first began to eat animals (27. 1–32. 2). It is preceded by a number of paragraphs in which Theophrastus attempts to prove that animal sacrifice is not pleasing to the gods and is entirely rejected by them (25. 1–7). The last paragraph preceding the account on the Jews (25. 7) concludes the arguments with the accusation that humans sacrifice to the gods not because they wish to satisfy them, but because they want to satisfy their own desire for eating meat:

And we sacrifice, of [animals] fit for sacrifice, not those which gratify the gods, but rather by far those which gratify the desires of men, witnessing against ourselves that we persist in such sacrifices for the sake of enjoyment.

Now comes Theophrastus's account of the Jews (2. 26. 1–4):²²

(1) But²³ †of [the] Syrians, [the] Jews†,²⁴ because of [their mode of] sacrifice from the very beginning, even now, says Theophrastus, perform an animal sacrifice

22. For the various editions of the text, see notes 12–13 above. The Greek text, with the emendations referred to in notes 24, 25, 28, 30, and 31, follows: (1) καίτοι †Σύρων μὲν Ἰουδαίῳ† διὰ τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς θυσίαν ἔτι καὶ νῦν, φησὶν ὁ Θεόφραστος, ζωοθυτοῦσι. εἰ τὸν αὐτὸν ἡμᾶς τρόπον τις κελεύει θύειν, ἀποσταίημεν ἂν τῆς πράξεως. (2) οὐ γὰρ ἐστιώμενοι τῶν τυθέντων, ὀλοκαυτοῦντες δὲ ταῦτα νυκτός καὶ κατ' αὐτῶν πολὺ μέλι καὶ οἶνον λείβοντες ἀναλίσκουσι τὴν θυσίαν θάπτον, ἵνα τοῦ δεινοῦ μὴδ' ὁ πανόπτης γένοιτο θεατῆς. (3) καὶ ταῦτα δρῶσι νηστεύοντες τὰς ἀνά μῆσον τούτων ἡμέρας κατὰ δὲ πάντα τοῦτον τὸν χρόνον, ἅτε φιλόσοφοι τὸ γένος ὄντες, περὶ τοῦ θείου μὲν ἀλλήλοις λαλοῦσι, τῆς δὲ νυκτός τῶν ἄστρων ποιοῦνται τὴν θεωρίαν, βλέποντες εἰς αὐτὰ καὶ διὰ τῶν εὐχῶν θεοκλυτοῦντες. (4) κατήρξαντο γὰρ οὗτοι πρῶτοι τῶν τε λοιπῶν ζώων καὶ σφῶν αὐτῶν, ἀνάγκη καὶ οὐκ ἐπιθυμία τοῦτο πράξαντες.

23. καίτοι: In this context, the word indicates a contrast between Jews and the other humans mentioned in the previous section.

24. The formulation in the MSS of Eusebius—Σύρων μὲν Ἰουδαίῳ—presents two major difficulties. First, the sentence lacks an apodosis to μέν. The particle μέν does not—in this sentence—have an absolute meaning ("certainly," as emphasis; why would emphasis be required here?). The previous passage does not provide any clue, and neither does the following text. The potential reader would not have known who the Jews were in any case. Second, the combination Σύρων Ἰουδαίῳ sounds defective in Greek. Mras (1982), the editor of Eusebius, conjectured that ὦν had dropped out after Σύρων, presumably because of dittography, but the resultant Σύρων ὦν μὲν Ἰουδαίῳ makes even worse Greek. Several words have probably been omitted. The general meaning might have been as follows: the Jews are a community of philosopher-priests of the Syrian people. Cf. Clearchus (in Joseph. *Ap.* 1. 179): οἱ φιλόσοφοι παρὰ μὲν Ἰνδοῖς Καλανοί, παρὰ δὲ Σύροις Ἰουδαίῳ τοῦνομα λαβόντες ἀπὸ τοῦ τόπου ("The philosophers among the Indians are called Kalanoi, among the Syrians, Jews, taking their name from the place"); this is also implied by Megasthenes' reference to the Jews (in Clem. *Strom.* 1. 15 (725): "All the [views] which have been expressed about nature among the ancient [Greeks] are also expressed among those who philosophize outside Greece, some [views] among the Indians by the Brachmans (= Brahmins), and some in Syria by the Jews"; and

(ζωοθυτοῦσι).²⁵ If someone were to command us to sacrifice in the same way, we would be repelled²⁶ from the act. (2) For²⁷ they (= the Jews) do not eat the sacrificed [animals], but burn them completely at night and by pouring on them much honey and wine they waste away²⁸ the sacrifice more quickly, lest the all-seeing [sun]²⁹ becomes a spectator of the terrible [deed]. (3) And they do these things³⁰ fasting for the days between these.³¹ During all this time, since they are philosophers by descent,³² they speak to each other about the divine, while at night they observe the stars, looking at them and calling on god through prayers. (4) For these (= the Jews) were the first to sacrifice both of other animals and of themselves (i.e., also human sacrifices), having done this out of necessity and not from desire.

The passage has led scholars to describe Theophrastus's attitude toward the Jews as "positive," "full of admiration," and even as "idealizing." These scholars place great emphasis on the designation of the Jews as "philosophers" who spend much of their time discussing the ways of the divine, stargazing, and praying. Since

cf. the way other groups of philosopher-priests are presented in Hellenistic literature: the Magi—"the philosophers among the Persians"; the Brahmins—"the philosophers among the Indians"; the Druids—"the philosophers among the Gauls"; the Getae—"the philosophers among the Thracians." See below, note 63.

25. The reading in the MSS of Porphyry is ζωοθυτῶντες, while Eusebius wrote ζωοθυτοῦτων. The latter form, however, does not agree with the nominative Ἰουδαῖοι, and neither form is a finite verb, which is required here. Bernays (1866) 85 emended to ζωοθυτοῦσι, which seems to be the right, save the iota subscriptum, which should be omitted (see later in the discussion).

26. The verb ἀφίστημι with the genitive can mean "shrink from" (cf. LSJ s.v. 4B). This negatively charged translation is more appropriate in the context than "abstain from," which is emotionally neutral.

27. On the causal link of γάρ in this sentence and paragraph, see below, note 48.

28. The MSS read ἀνήλισκον. Bernays emended to ἀναλίσκουσι, which is required by his reading ζωοθυτοῦσι.

29. A similar expression appears in Lysimachus (Joseph. *Ap.* 1. 306). Stern (*GLAJJ* 1: 386), in his commentary to Lysimachus, has drawn attention to the parallels in Herodotus 1. 138 (the sun "sees" sins and faults, and punishment comes as a result); Clement *Stromateis* 5. 7.

30. The MSS reading is τοῦτο, but the sentence requires the plural, ταῦτα.

31. The text reads: καὶ νηστεύοντες τὰς ἀνὰ μέσον τούτων (Eus.; MSS τούτου) ἡμέρας. The formulation is difficult. What are "these" (τούτων)? As the sentence stands, the only possible interpretation is that "these" refer to the nocturnal sacrifices, and that the Jews fasted for the days between the sacrifices. It is a strange statement, even in this imaginative account of the Jews (τούτου is no better). The clause ἀνὰ μέσον τούτων is almost certainly corrupt.

32. φιλόσοφοι τὸ γένος: this can be translated "philosophers by descent," "philosophers from birth," "philosophers due to their nature," "philosophers according to their nature," "philosophers according to their race," and so on. I am inclined to translate the phrase here as "philosophers by descent," which is the literal meaning. A similar phrase—γέννη φιλοσόφων—a reference to all the "barbarian" nations wrongly attributed to Plato appears in Clement *Stromateis* 1. 15 [68. 1]. Guttman 1: 78 n. 26 suggests translating our phrase as "philosophers in essence." But the parallels he cites from Greek literature correspond to the phrase in Theophrastus neither in context nor syntactically.

sacrifices receive great emphasis, it has been assumed that Theophrastus regards the Jews as a caste or sect of philosopher-priests.³³

Before turning to a discussion and reevaluation of the account, it may be worth clarifying the connection between the passage and what Theophrastus says before and after it. The passage states that the Jews do not eat the meat of the sacrificial victim, and that they were the first to conduct animal and even human sacrifice, which they did “out of necessity and not from desire” (para. 4). These assertions stand in stark contrast to what is said in the previous passage, according to which humans sacrifice out of a desire to enjoy the eating of animal flesh. The Jews, therefore, are exceptional in their motivation for performing sacrifices. They continue their practice to this very day, but only out of respect for an ancient custom whose reason has long been forgotten. In the past, that reason was “necessity.” What, then, was this “necessity”? The following section outlines Theophrastus’s main version of his anthropological theory concerning the development of sacrificial customs and the eating of animals: it was a famine, a dearth of the plantation normally used for eating and sacrifice, which obliged humans to sacrifice first humans, and then animals (2. 27. 1–4; cf. 12. 1–2).³⁴

In the passages that have come down to us, Theophrastus does not say whether the Jews ate animal flesh; but since he claims that the Jews did not eat the victim’s flesh, and in the light of the context and the anthropological theory he is presenting, it seems he assumed that the Jews never reached the stage of eating animal flesh. In other words, the anthropological development of the Jews was arrested at the stage of human and animal sacrifice prior to eating the flesh of the victims. Porphyry knew very well that the Jews ate flesh, and noted that they refrained from eating certain types of meat, particularly pork (*Abst.* 1. 14; 2. 61; 4. 11). He may, therefore, have omitted some statement by Theophrastus concerning Jewish “vegetarianism.”

THE ASSESSMENT OF JEWISH SACRIFICIAL CUSTOMS

A reading of the account of Jewish sacrifice, in the context of Theophrastus’s anthropological theory, indicates that the author intended to praise two aspects of the practice while condemning the rest. The favorable aspects appear from the context: (1) the Jews do not eat the meat of the sacrificial victim (if not meat by and large), and (2) the animal sacrifice is performed out of respect for an ancient

33. See Bernays (1866) 111–15; Guttman (1946) 156–65; Jaeger (1938a) 359–60; Guttman 1: 74–88; Stern (1973) 162–63; id., *GLAJJ* 1: 7–8; also Jaeger (1938b) 137 ff.; Hengel (1973) 466–67; Stern (1976) 2: 1105; Méléze-Modrzejewski (1981) 419; Philopfer (1990) 202; Feldman (1993) 140, 203–4; Kasher (1996) 157. See also Feldman (1983) 282. For a more sober view, see Gabba (1988) 620 and Méléze-Modrzejewski (1989) 4–5.

34. Cf. the word ἀνάγκη (necessity), which appears several times, e.g., 2. 12. 1.

custom preserved in its original form. The sacrifice was conducted originally out of necessity and was not an excuse for a feast. Only at a later stage did humans inaugurate a meal to accompany the sacrifice, out of “desire” for meat. Later still, meat was eaten for its own sake, without sacrifice. The Jews, however, remained loyal to the original custom, neither adopting the accompanying meal nor acquiring a desire for flesh. Elsewhere Theophrastus explicitly praises the observation of ancient customs (Porph. *Abst.* 2. 5. 4; cf. Tac. *Hist.* 5. 5. 1). In this respect the custom manifests a certain sincerity in the religious conduct of the Jews, as opposed to the hypocrisy of other peoples who sacrifice only tasty animals (25. 7).

The outstanding negative aspect of the present Jewish practices is the mode of sacrifice. The passage emphasizes in various forms that the practice is exceptionally cruel. The most significant sentence says: “If someone were to command us to sacrifice in the same way, we would be repelled from the act” (2. 26. 1), and in the next paragraph (2) the act is explicitly called “terrible.” Even the Jews are said to be ashamed of the deed and to do everything in their power to prevent the sun from finding any traces of it by removing the evidence (para. 2). As far as the practice itself is concerned, the editors of Porphyry read, following the manuscripts, various forms of the verb ζῳοθυτεῖν (ζῳον—animal), meaning that the Jews used “to perform an animal sacrifice” (para. 1).³⁵ In the following paragraph (2) the Jews are said not to eat of the meat of the sacrifice, but to burn the animal completely (holocaust). Theophrastus has accordingly been understood to mean that the Jews slaughter a victim and burn it completely, in contrast to the familiar Greek custom of partaking of the victim’s flesh.

This reading, however, poses an insoluble difficulty. What is so repellent about sacrificing a holocaust? In what way is a holocaust more cruel than a sacrifice in which only certain parts are burnt, while and the other parts are eaten by the participants? After the long and ostensibly objective—“scientific” argumentation against animal sacrifice, this outburst against the practice of sacrificing holocausts is disproportionate and indeed out of place. Moreover, if by the statement “we would be repelled by the act” Theophrastus is referring to those already convinced, namely, he and his supporters, why does he refer to the Jewish sacrifice with much greater severity than he does to the animal sacrifices of other nations? He would surely have perceived Jewish abstinence from eating meat as a mitigating factor making the deed actually less atrocious and disgusting than other forms of sacrifice, inasmuch as human sacrifice was usually regarded as less

35. Cf. ζῳοκτονία (the killing of animals); ζῳοφαγεῖν (to live off animal flesh); ζωγράφος (first, a painter of animals; later, a painter in general); ζωογονεῖν (to raise animals). Many additional examples can be found in the dictionary of Dimitrakos (1964) 3210–24. Bernays (1866) 83, Pötscher (1964) 173, and Fortenbaugh et al. (1992) 422, all translate ζῳοθυτεῖν as *Tieropfer*, “sacrificial animals.”

detestable than cannibalism. If Theophrastus meant by “we” his Athenian audience—and this is the most natural and acceptable interpretation—why would Athenians and other cultivated Greeks recoil from performing a whole burnt offering even if commanded to perform it?

Performing complete burnt offerings was a widely accepted custom and deeply rooted in Greek culture from its beginnings. Sacrifices of this sort were usually called *δλόκαυτοι* (holocausts), and sometimes *θυσίαι ἄγευστοι* (untasted sacrifices—e.g., Plut. *Mor.* 124B). These sacrifices were generally offered to the chthonic gods, heroes, the dead, and storm winds; they could also serve as a means of atonement and the fulfillment of pledges. The topic has been much discussed in the research of the past 120 years, and many examples have been adduced both from literary and historical sources and from archaeological and illustrative material. The custom was practiced in all parts of the Greek world, including Athens and its immediate vicinity, and spanned the centuries from the time of Homer through the classical age to the Hellenistic age.³⁶ This widely accepted picture has been modified by Walter Burkert in his general book on Greek religion: he points out that partaken sacrifices were occasionally made to the dead, heroes, and the chthonic gods, while holocausts were also made occasionally to Zeus.³⁷

A holocaust, therefore, was “normative” and widely accepted in the Greek world, even if less popular than partaken sacrifices. Bearing all this in mind, it seems that, were Athenians and other cultivated Greeks to be commanded to sacrifice a holocaust, there would have been no reason for them to recoil from the deed. Theophrastus would not have made such an outspoken statement within an argument meant to persuade his audience and judges. What, then, aroused his strong disgust?

The difficulty can be solved by a small emendation of the verb *ζωοθυτεῖν* (to sacrifice animals), namely, the removal of the iota subscript. The meaning of *ζωοθυτεῖν* is “to sacrifice a victim alive” (*ζῶός* = alive),³⁸ that is, without killing it

36. Material on this matter has been gathered and discussed in the following works in particular: Stengel (1880) 737–43; (1883) 361–79; Nilsson (1906) 436–53; Rohde (1907) 205 ff., esp. 235–45; Stengel (1910) 93–95, esp. 126–45, 188–90; (1920) 16, 124–27, 136–39, 141–42; Farnell (1928) 95–96, 309; Meuli (1946) 193, 209; Nilsson (1955) 139–42, 178–82; Rudhardt (1958) 238–39. Of the many examples in the sources I shall mention just *Odyssey* 10. 518–33; 11. 25–46.

37. See Burkert (1985) 63. Similar remarks are scattered in a variety of forms throughout his detailed book on sacrifices: Burkert (1972). Ekroth (2002) argues in a monograph on hero-cult that holocaust sacrifices to heroes were quite rare (being considered as similar to sacrifices to the gods), as were funeral sacrifices (as distinct from ordinary sacrifices to the dead); see also Nock (1944).

38. Cf. the words *ζωοτοκεῖν* (to give birth to live young); *ζωγρεῖν* (to take a prisoner alive); *ζῶαγρία* (reward for a life saved); *ζωοποιεῖν* (to reanimate, keep alive, etc.); *ζωοφυτεῖν* (to give life); *ζῶοκαυστος* (burnt alive); *ζωογονεῖν* (to propagate, keep alive); *ζωοποιός* (creator of life)—

prior to burning.³⁹ In a passage suffering heavily from bad transmission, the iota may have been added for one reason or another by Byzantine copyists,⁴⁰ or even by Porphyry, who was well acquainted with Jewish practices,⁴¹ and may therefore have found it necessary to emend the text.

The victim is burnt whole: this is the form of the sacrifice, and this is also the method by which the victim is killed. The burning of the animal, a slow and most painful death accompanied by the horrific anguished cries of the victim, is thus what made the act so appalling. To express this, Theophrastus employs a rhetorical *topos* found most prominently in *Dissoi logoi*, an anonymous sophistic work from about 400 B.C.E.; there, a whole string of actions that would repel or shame a civilized Greek are listed, even including customs of semi-Greeks, and not only those of distant peoples.⁴²

Such a form of sacrifice is alien to Athens and other places representative of Greek culture in the classical and Hellenistic ages. From the hundreds of pieces of information we have on Greek sacrificial practices, it is known to have been practiced on a special annual occasion in Aetolian Calydon, whence it passed to

Theophrastus *On the Causes of Plants* 2. 9. 6. Dozens of such compounds are to be found in the Greek dictionary of Dimitrakos (1964).

39. The Greek-English dictionary of Liddell-Scott-Jones (s.v.) gives the verb appearing in Porphyry as ζωοθυτέω and translates accordingly, “sacrifice live victims,” and this is how it is translated by Stern (*GLAJJ* 1: 10), although he writes ζωοθυτούντων and follows up this reading in his commentary (cf. Stern [1976] 1104–5). Elsewhere, Theophrastus uses the expression θύειν τὰ ἔμψυχα when describing the sacrifice of animals (2. 3. 11). Interestingly, while the iota subscript appears in the Eusebius edition by Mras, it does not appear in the edition of Eusebius in the *Patrologia Graeca* (21. 681 [404.45]). Considering the general laxity of the *PG*, this should not serve as evidence.

40. The word ζῶον appearing in the passage twice (in the genitive case, para. 4–5) would have been enough to confuse copyists and editors. For the major corruptions in the passage, see notes 24, 25, 28, 30, and 31 above. Theophrastus’s books were already damaged in the Hellenistic period and were extensively reconstructed at the beginning of the first century B.C.E., a procedure that introduced many errors (see on this Strabo 13. 1. 54, and see below, note 78).

41. Porphyry viewed the Jews favorably and was well versed in their beliefs, history, and customs, in addition to being familiar with all the writings of Josephus, and at least Genesis from the Pentateuch (on this, see Stern, *GLAJJ* 2: nos. 456b, 466, and a reservation on p. 424 n. 6). His detailed response to the Book of Daniel, large fragments of which are preserved in Jerome, also displays the extent of his familiarity with Jewish sacred literature.

42. See *Dissoi logoi* 2. 14 (= D-K 90. 2. 14 [2: 408]), which refers for example to the custom of the Massagetai, inhabitants of the region between the Caspian Sea and Lake Ural, of eating their deceased parents, saying that their stomach is the best grave (cf. Hdt. 1. 216). The writer adds that if any Greek were to perform such a deed, he would be exiled from his land and “would die miserably as one who had done terrible and shameful deeds.” See also *Dissoi logoi* 2. 12–14 and 16 on the customs of various peoples and tribes that cultivated Greeks would not dream of following. The peoples mentioned include the Macedonians, Thracians, Scythians, Persians, and Lydians—and even the Spartans in a small matter.

the Messenians (Paus. 7. 18. 8–13; 4. 31. 7).⁴³ The Aetolians, residing in a mountainous and almost inaccessible region, were not considered Hellenes by the civilized and cultivated Greeks. They were generally described as primitive tribes thriving on war and robbery.⁴⁴ The distance between the Athenians and the Messenians, the helots of the Spartans, was greater, and there was also a geographical barrier making access difficult. It is quite doubtful whether Theophrastus was aware of these eccentric local customs: he was based in the Lyceum and did not travel around Greece, and even then, he used to complain about having no time to write his books because of the need to check details for his public lectures (*Letter to Phanias*—Diogenes Laertius 5. 37). A comprehensive, popular geographic-folkloristic work on Greece, of the sort written by Pausanias centuries later, was unavailable in his time.

Whatever the case may be, these two isolated but mutually connected instances could not signify Hellenic acceptance of the custom, just as human sacrifices in Arcadia, still performed in the time of Theophrastus (Porph. *Abst.* 2. 27. 2), seemed to him not to represent enlightened Greek culture and Athenian norms.⁴⁵ Theophrastus could, therefore, have stated confidently that had his audience—

43. In the annual ceremony held in Calydon in honor of the goddess Artemis Laphria, birds, wild boars, deer, bear cubs and fox cubs, and mature beasts of prey were customarily thrown into the fire on the altar. Pausanias (7. 18. 11–13) adds that this cult was moved to Patrae in Achaea in the reign of Augustus under special circumstances after the destruction of Calydon. The cult was apparently adopted much earlier by the Messenians, when they were close to Calydon, after Naupactus was handed over to them (425 B.C.E.; Paus. 4. 31. 7). Pausanias also tells of a similar cult in a temple of Eileithyia in Messenia (31. 9). The details indicate that this was a variation of the adopted Aetolian cult.

44. See Thucydides' celebrated comments: 1. 3. 5; 3. 94. 4–5. On the customs and religion of the Aetolians, see Anthonetti (1990).

45. On the practice of human sacrifice to Zeus Lykaios on Mt. Lykaion in Arcadia, see Hughes (1991) 96–107, 115–16. The usual interpretation of Theophrastus's statement concerning the customs of the Arcadians is questioned by Dennis (1988) 213–17. See also Dennis's conclusion concerning the Greeks' attitude in the classical period toward human sacrifice (364–67). I should add (*contra* Burkert [1985] 61–62) that other fire cults known from the Greek world do not seem to have included animal sacrifice without the animal being killed first. The sources, only some of which are adduced by Burkert, say nothing about throwing live animals into the fire. In these ceremonies human dummies made of wood were thrown onto the fire, as were bronze statues, work tools, weapons, ornaments, clothes, booty, etc., but no mention is made of live victims being cast into the flames. In one case—Hyampolis in Phocis—the aetiological story in at least one version clearly hints at prior killing of the victim (Paus. 10. 1. 2; see also on this point Nilsson [1906] 223). It is also worth noting the fire cult in honor of Heracles on Mt. Oita in memory of the legend of his self-immolation there (see, e.g., Ov. *Met.* 9. 230 ff.). Nilsson (1955) 131, in his discussion of this event, thinks that the myth was created following the local custom of throwing dummies onto the fire. Archaeological remains found at the site indicate that tools, weapons, bronze statues of Heracles, ostraca inscribed with oaths to Heracles, and animals were all burnt there (Nilsson, 131 and 87). However, there is no evidence or hint in the sources that victims were burnt alive, not even in the relatively detailed story about the sacrifice in Diodorus 4. 38–39. If there is anything to be learned from the condensed

Athenians and other cultivated Greeks—been commanded to burn victims while they were still living, they would have recoiled from the deed. The reader would also have been able to understand why the Jews were so ashamed of the act, hiding it from the eye of the sun, and making haste to cover their tracks.⁴⁶

Theophrastus states that this form of sacrifice has been performed by Jews since ancient times. The very burning of the animal in addition to the abstention from its flesh indicates adherence to an ancient tradition. Theophrastus stated earlier that plant sacrifices were completely burnt in honor of the gods, and explained that this was done in order to bestow upon the plant sacrifices eternal life such as that enjoyed by the gods—the heavenly bodies similar to fire.⁴⁷ It would seem that in his view this was done first, and for the same reason, in the case of human and animal sacrifices. Only later, as a result of the institution of the accompanying feast, were animals killed prior to being burnt. Some of the limbs were burnt on the altar, and the rest were eaten by the celebrants.⁴⁸

. . .

reference to the cult of Heracles on Mt. Oita in the scholion on *Iliad* 22. 159 (ed. Erbse [1977]), it is that the bull (if it was to be sacrificed) was skinned before being burnt, from which we may infer that it was already dead (an inference that may also be made from the line in the *Iliad* that is being interpreted). On the non-Greek origin of the cult on Mt. Oita, and on the main feature, the burning of the image of Heracles, see the approach of Farnell (1928) 166–74. Be that as it may, Mt. Oita was in the “Wild West” of ancient Greece, in northeast Aetolia. On the mountain itself lived a smattering of Aetolians whose links with mainstream Hellenic culture were quite tenuous. The sacrifice of Heracles on Mt. Oita was a local custom and not a Panhellenic event. It is interesting that Pausanias, who made a special effort to provide information on any eccentric type of cult at the sites he visited, made no mention of this cult, although he mentions and describes Mt. Oita in about a dozen places, and despite his obvious inclination to elaborate on Heracles cults in other places.

46. Cf. the removal of traces of human sacrifice by Egyptians: Plutarch *On Isis and Osiris* 380D. In the same case it is explicitly stated that the victim was burnt alive.

47. See pp. 19–20 above.

48. It is worth noting that the location of the particle γάρ (for) at the beginning of paragraph 2 (“for they do not eat sacrificed [animals] but burn them completely at night”) does not pose any real problem for the interpretation suggested above. The particle does not refer to the previous sentence, as an explanation of why Greeks recoil from the act. That sentence is an especially strong rhetorical statement that does not need any explanation (in fact, an elaboration would only detract from its force). What follows γάρ serves to give a practical explanation for the basic statement about the Jews, placed two sentences before: they burn the victim alive, since they do not eat the flesh. The reasoning is that eating the victim is what necessitates its being killed prior to burning. The flexible use of γάρ is discernible in the same passage in paragraph 4, where it obviously does not refer back to the previous sentence (the “fact” that the Jews were the first to sacrifice animals and humans cannot be an explanation for their engaging in philosophy and astronomy) but refers to 2. 25. 7 (“having done this out of necessity” [26. 4] as against “for the sake of enjoyment” [25. 7]). Theophrastus is not exceptional in this usage. It was already noticed in the nineteenth century that Herodotus often uses γάρ to refer not to the previous sentence but to a much earlier sentence: see Broschmann (1882)

Greeks would have found more offensive than the reference to the mode of animal sacrifice the statement appearing at the end of the passage, according to which the Jews were the first to perform animal and human sacrifice. It is not stated here whether the Jews continue to perform human sacrifice.⁴⁹ The anthropological development itself, described by Theophrastus, is common to some societies; he knows that the Carthaginians, the Arcadians, and the Albanians still perform human sacrifice (2. 27. 2), but he singles out the Jews as the first. He is certainly not attempting to idealize them. If Theophrastus does not apply harsh words against Jewish human sacrifices, this is only because this reference is part of the general survey striving to describe scientifically the anthropological process (unlike the reference to the sacrifice of animals, which is the issue at stake). For this reason Theophrastus does not explicitly condemn the Arcadians and the Carthaginians, who continue to sacrifice humans even in his time.

THE SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Nothing Theophrastus writes fits real Jewish sacrificial customs: the Jews did not sacrifice only burnt offerings; they did not refrain from eating the meat parts of the sacrifice; they did not burn a victim while it was still alive; the sacrifice was not performed at night; the participants fasted neither during the sacrifice nor after it; they did not pour honey and wine over the victim, and the Torah even explicitly forbids the sacrifice of honey (Lev. 2.11).⁵⁰ At least two of the other activities that the Jews are said to carry out at the time of sacrifice, in their capacity as “philosopher-priests”—observing the stars and discussing matters divine—did not accompany the Jewish sacrifice; and the first of these activities

17–18. Denniston (1954) 63–64, in his classic work on the Greek particles, adduced on this point a list of examples from Attic tragedy, including many examples where the speaker uses γάρ to refer to something he has said earlier, although another character has spoken since. The phenomenon is well represented in historical, ethnographic, and partly philosophical texts, especially where γάρ is preceded by a main statement, followed by secondary ones (as is the case in paras. 1–2).

49. That the Jews are not explicitly mentioned in the following passage (Porph. *Abst.* 2. 27), where Carthaginians and Arcadians are cited as examples of peoples who perform human sacrifice “even now,” does not necessarily imply that Theophrastus thought that the Jews had desisted from the practice. The Carthaginians and the Arcadians are only examples, and, furthermore, the continuation of the sentence is cut off: οὐκ . . . μόνον . . . ἀλλὰ . . . (“Not only the Carthaginians and the Arcadians but also . . .”). What comes after ἀλλὰ in the text does not conform with the sentence, indicating a lacuna. In any case, I would have expected Porphyry to omit any reference to the Jews performing human sacrifice (if there were such a reference). He knew very well that the Jews did not sacrifice humans in his own day. That they did it in the past he could conclude from the story of the sacrifice of Abraham in Genesis, with which he was very familiar (see note 41 above).

50. This was known even to some Greeks, in one way or another, at a later time, although it was accompanied by inaccurate interpretations and additions. See Plutarch *Quaestiones convivales* 672B.

was alien to them at that time. The sacrificial rite described by Theophrastus is a dark and somber ceremony that is hidden from the eye of the sun. In actual fact, the Jewish sacrifice was a public ceremony performed with joy and accompanied by music and song;⁵¹ and to argue against the statement that the Jews were the first to perform human and animal sacrifice would be redundant. It is clear, then, that the source for this information could not have been Jewish, not even a Jewish source modified by Theophrastus.⁵²

From the second century B.C.E., Greek anti-Jewish writers drew inspiration from Egyptian rumors and written sources. In the early Hellenistic period, when Greek authors had no reason to be hostile toward the Jews, there is all the more reason to regard Egyptian rumors as Theophrastus's sources of inspiration for this sort of information. Indeed, Theophrastus is known to have used Egyptian sources in a number of his works,⁵³ and received oral reports from Greeks returning from Egypt.⁵⁴ It may therefore be suggested that Theophrastus gained from such sources the information concerning Jewish human sacrifice as well as the notion that the Jews sacrificed animals by burning them alive.

Certain details of Theophrastus's anthropological theory indicate application of Egyptian traditions. Theophrastus, like Aristotle and other Greek authors, regarded Egypt as the cradle of civilization, and the Egyptians as the wisest of humans (*Abst.* 2. 5. 1, 26. 5).⁵⁵ For this reason he attributes to the Egyptians the institution of the first—the vegetarian—stage of sacrifice (*Abst.* 5. 1). The second stage began, according to the main version (the “famine” version), when men neglected sacred matters and were accordingly punished with famine (*Abst.* 27. 1).

51. The gloomy character of the ceremony in contrast to the joyfulness of the Jewish cult has already been noticed by Bernays (1866) 11; Guttman 1: 80.

52. Various suggestions based on the assumption that Theophrastus used Jewish sources of information have been offered, esp. by Bernays (1866) 111–14 (a trace of the sacrifice of Abraham; the fasting of the clan of priests on duty [אנשי המעמד]; fixing the end of the day of fasting by the appearance of the stars; the requirement to burn by morning whatever is left of the meat of the victim; and the continual burnt offerings [קרבן התמיד]). These suggestions have been rejected by many and have been replaced by other associations (the story of Cain and Abel; a comparison with the Phoenician-Carthaginian custom, etc.); see esp. the reservations and refutations of Reinach (1895) 8 n. 3; Radin (1915) 82; Jaeger (1938a) 143; (1938b) 135; Guttman 1: 78–80 (who is inclined to accept some of Bernays's suggestions); Stern, *GLAJJ* 1: 11; Gabba (1989) 619–20; Méléze-Modrzejewski (1989) 9. See also note 81 below on Bernays.

53. See the references of Theophrastus to lists (ἀναγραφαί) of Egyptian kings and to works on Egyptian kings in *On Stones* 24, 55; and cf. Eichholtz (1965) 9–10.

54. On information Theophrastus received orally on botanical matters in Egypt, see Fraser (1994) 180–81. See also notes 4, 8, and p. 17 above.

55. On Egypt as the cradle of man and civilization see esp. Hecataeus in Diodorus 1. 10 ff. Herodotus reported this in the name of the Egyptians themselves and the inhabitants of Elis in his Egyptian *logos* (Hdt. 2. 160).

This led to the decline of mankind, from human sacrifice to cannibalism, animal sacrifice, and ultimately the eating of animals. The sequence of the second stage is peculiar to Theophrastus, as are the details themselves, being without parallels, so far as we know, in old Greek traditions concerning the stages of the decline of mankind.⁵⁶ The causal connection between impiety and famine is well known from classical Egyptian sources, as well as from texts originating in the Ptolemaic period, such as the celebrated “Oracle of the Potter.” These elements and cannibalism are to be found separately in Greek traditions about Egypt. Thus, the *Bibliothēkē*, wrongly attributed to Apollodorus of Athens, relates that Busiris, the mythological Egyptian king, established a sacrifice of strangers to appease the god after nine consecutive years of drought (2. 5. 11; followed by a number of later Greek and Latin authors and scholiasts). Pseudo-Apollodorus is to be dated to the first or second century C.E., but the traditions are much earlier. All these have their parallels in anti-Jewish Egyptian stories that were passed on to Greek authors in the Hellenistic age. Jewish disdain for the Egyptian gods is said by Lysimachus of Alexandria to have brought famine upon the land of Egypt,⁵⁷ and the second version of the Egyptian blood libel imputes cannibalism to the Jews (Joseph. *Ap.* 2. 95),⁵⁸ thus also recalling the statement that the Jews were the first to introduce human sacrifice.

That Theophrastus was inspired by Egyptian oral sources and rumors in forming his theory is thus rather plausible. What still deserves attention is the possible role of the Jews in the theory. Significantly enough, immediately after stating that the Jews were the first to perform human and animal sacrifices (26. 4), at the end of the passage on the Jews, Theophrastus adds the following sentence (26. 5):

This may be seen in observing the Egyptians, the wisest of all, who refrain so much from killing any animal that they turned the images [of animals] into representations of the gods.

That is to say: the claim that the Jews were the first to perform animal and human sacrifice is corroborated by the fact that the Egyptians refrained from killing animals.⁵⁹ What is the connection between the two items? A link in the chain

56. Excluding the “neglect” of the gods, which also appears in Hesiod *Works and Days* 136; this, however, is but one of a series of sins perpetrated in the Silver Age, and the punishment is not famine but war.

57. Lysimachus in Josephus *Contra Apionem* 1. 305–6, and see below, pp. 321–24, on the second version, according to which the *dyssebeis* (men disrespectful of the gods and of cultic worship) caused *akarpia* (crop failure). Cf. Hecataeus in Diodorus 40. 3. 1–2, on the neglect of religious duties by the Egyptians themselves, caused by the conduct of the Jews, as the reason for the plague.

58. See below, pp. 259–63.

59. Animal sacrifice and the eating of meat by the Egyptians is well known from Egyptian sources and is described in Greek sources. See, e.g., Herodotus 2. 37–42, 47–49; Hecataeus in

of reasoning is missing. Porphyry may well have abbreviated what he found in Theophrastus, as was sometimes his wont (2. 32. 3–5; cf., 2. 7. 2). Although other possibilities should not be ruled out, the intent may well be that in the distant past, when famine struck the land of Egypt, the Jews turned to human sacrifice, and later to animal sacrifice. The indigenous Egyptians, however, being the wisest of humans (cf. 2. 5. 1), refrained from harming animals, as they continue to do to this day. In this context it is worth mentioning a statement of Hecataeus of Abdera, reported in abbreviated form and not too clearly by Diodorus (1. 84. 1). According to the extant text, there are those who say that in the distant past, when Egypt was suffering from a great famine, many people ate their fellow men, but none of the Egyptians ate the meat of sacred animals. As is usual with Hecataeus, this report is based on Egyptian traditions. Accordingly, the autochthonous Egyptians not only avoided cannibalism but also refrained from eating animals. The cannibals were obviously the foreigners staying in Egypt, but who they were is anyone's guess.

The reference to the Jews fasting (26. 3) may also be ascribed to Egyptian influence. Observing the fast in close proximity to the sacrifice (before and after the deed), and the mention of this immediately after the statement that the act was "terrible," would imply that the fasting was intended as form of purification and atonement.⁶⁰ It is not a Greek fast, a rarity in itself, of a purely ritual nature to commemorate events in the lives of the gods. It is a fast along Egyptian lines, with a view to purification and atonement. Greeks knew ever since the time of Herodotus that Egyptian priests would fast before sacrifices and would even whip themselves.⁶¹

If indeed the Jews played a central role in Theophrastus's anthropological theory, this still does not make Theophrastus anti-Semitic. He had met no Jews

Diodorus 1. 70. 4 ff. Theophrastus's remark appears to be a hasty generalization based on information about the abstention of Egyptians from harming species of sacred and certain other animals.

60. The fast could not be related to the subsequent account about Jewish philosophers observing the stars, discussing matters divine, and praying. It is not an act of ascetism intended to distance the participants from the material world and concentrate minds on the divine. The context of the sentence indicates otherwise.

61. See esp. Herodotus 2. 40, and the detailed description by Chaeremon of the Egyptian priesthood (Porph. *Abst.* 4. 6–8). On the fasts of the Egyptian priests, see Lloyd (1976) 182. From the classical Greek world we know only of fasts in honor of Demeter and those in the Eleusinian mysteries, if we exclude mere limitations on food and drink of one sort or another, which occurred in other places and on different occasions. On fasts in classical Greece see Erbsman (1929), where they are discussed indifferently with Roman fasts, according to types of fast; L. Ziehn, *RE* s.v. "Νηστεία," cols. 88–107; Gerlitz (1954); Nilsson (1955) 94–95; Erbsman (1969) 456 ff. Unfortunately, the reference to the time of the Jewish fast is corrupt (see note 31 above), and we cannot ascertain whether the fast precedes the sacrifice or follows it.

and hardly knew anything about them. At best he is a witness to the beginnings of Egyptian anti-Judaism. But he was certainly not an admirer of the Jews.

THE JEWS AS A COMMUNITY OF PHILOSOPHER-PRIESTS

The second central component of the passage is the description of the Jews as philosophers, and the activities accompanying the sacrifice: conversation on matters divine, observation of the stars, and prayer. All this sounds complimentary; but is it enough to balance the negative impression of Jews created by their sacrificial practices? Let us first trace the sources of information and/or inspiration, and place the classification of the Jews in its historical context.

From the passage as a whole we can learn—and indeed this has been remarked upon by scholars—that Theophrastus regards the Jews as a community of philosopher-priests among (or “of”) the Syrians.⁶² They are continually engaged exclusively in matters of cult worship and activities to do with the divine. The statement that the Jews are “philosophers by descent” (or “from birth”—para. 3) indicates that their occupation in philosophy is due not to individual but rather to collective hereditary talent and/or inclination. As Theophrastus did not know anything about Jewish beliefs, this portrayal would not have been his invention. It seems to be based on a widespread popular rumor. It is reminiscent of explicit statements made by two younger contemporaries of Theophrastus. Clearchus, the Peripatetic philosopher-author, wrote: “The philosophers are called [. . .] Jews among the Syrians” (Joseph. *Ap.* 1. 179); and Megasthenes, who was sent to India as an ambassador of Seleucus I, implicitly compared the status of the Jews among the Syrians with that of the Brahmans among the Indians (Clem. *Strom.* 1. 15 [72. 5]).

The description of the Jews as a community of philosopher-priests is understandable when considered against the broader background of the general and inexact notions the Greeks of that time had about Oriental peoples, with regard to their beliefs, customs, ethnic relationships, and social structure. Greek authors wrote about the existence of sects, castes, or communities of priests, philosophers, or philosopher-priests throughout the Orient. The most prominent of these were the Egyptian priests, the Magi among the Persians, the Chaldaeans (a misnomer

62. This has been noted by Bernays (1866) 111 and repeated by many others using various sociological terms. The objection of Jaeger (1938b) 132 n. 4 is unjustified. Cf. Stern, *GLAJJ* 1: 10; Philhopper (1990) 73–75; and note 24 above. In fact, scholars speak about a “caste” or a “sect.” Both are wrong. Theophrastus described a group of people of common descent (“philosophers by descent”—para. 3), concentrated around their Temple. “Community” seems to be the appropriate term. Cf. below, p. 81, note 112.

in Greek literature referring to the priests of Mesopotamia) among the Assyrians and the Babylonians, and the Brahmans among the Indians.⁶³ All of these were entrusted with cult worship, and each had some sort of distinctive feature that caused the Greeks to label them “philosophers,” be it particular views on the origin and destiny of the soul, a dualist belief, activities such as observation of the stars, or extreme ascetic conduct intended to increase spiritual awareness, to mention but a few. The rumor that the Jews were philosopher-priests was probably based on a combination of vague information concerning the central status of the Temple in Jewish communal life, and the uniqueness of the Jewish cult and religion, above all their refraining from idol worship, which should have been noticed by curious Greek visitors.⁶⁴ The difficulty in distinguishing among the various Syrian ethnic groups may account for the Jews being defined as a Syrian community.

The activities ascribed to the Jews in their capacity as philosophers are discussions about divinity, which are held before and after the sacrifice; stargazing on the nights of the sacrifice; and calling on God through prayers. It was only natural for philosophers who doubled as priests and performed sacrifices to engage in theological discussions at a time of sacrifice. Also, the observation of the stars, the visible gods, was considered a theological activity: it was responsible for the very creation of the faith, constantly strengthening it, and inspiring people to think about various aspects of it.⁶⁵ The alleged performance of sacrifices at night inevitably invited the attribution of stargazing to the Jews.⁶⁶

63. These things are known from many sources, both historical and ethnographic. It will suffice to mention the lists of such groups in two late authors quoting or relying upon sources from the beginning of the Hellenistic period: Diogenes Laertius 1. 1–11; Clement *Stromateis* 1. 15–16 (see also Strabo 15. 1. 68, 70; 16. 2. 39; Diodorus 4. 31. 2. 4). Among the additional tribes or ethnic groups appearing in those sources are the Druids among the Gauls, the Getae among the Thracians, and the Samanaioi among the Bactrians. For a description of the Egyptian priesthood as a caste, see, e.g., Herodotus 2. 36ff.; Hecataeus in Diodorus 1. 70. 5–12, 73. 1–5; Chaeremon in Porphyry *On Abstinence* 4. 6–8.

64. The first explicit piece of information on the abstention of Jews from anthropomorphism and the worship of idols, and their belief in one god, is to be found in Hecataeus of Abdera (Diod. 40. 3. 4), which appeared some ten to fifteen years after the writing of Theophrastus’s account. See in detail pp. 95 and 133 below.

65. See Jaeger (1938b) 132–34 and esp. Guttman (1956) 159–65; 1: 80–86 (and references there to Plato); Stern, *GLAJJ* 1: 8, 11. See, e.g., the detailed account by Hecataeus of Abdera on the emergence of religious thinking following the observation of heavenly bodies (Diod. 1. 11–13).

66. The three pursuits attributed to the Jews by Theophrastus, stargazing, theological discussions, and praying, are reminiscent of three of the characteristics of the Magi, “the philosophers among the Persians” (Diog. Laert. 1. 6–8, citing authors of the early Hellenistic period). In the preliminary Hebrew version of this chapter (Bar-Kochva [2000b] 54–56), I suggested that Theophrastus was influenced by a contemporary rumor that the Jews descended from the Magi (Diog. Laert. 1. 9; on the source of the rumour, see below, p. 85, note 124). This link now seems to me rather doubtful;

As for prayers, the performers of priestly duties in Greece were skilled both in sacrifices and in prayers (e.g., Pl. *Pol.* 290c-d), and every sacrifice was accompanied by prayer.⁶⁷

THEOPHRASTUS ON “PHILOSOPHERS” AND ETHICS

Now that the classification of the Jews has been set in its historical context, it is time to consider the moral judgment of Theophrastus. Do the epithet “philosophers” and the related activities square with the negative features of the Jewish sacrificial customs? Anyone called a philosopher in the Hellenistic period was obviously assumed to have the knowledge and ability to deal with matters in the fields of philosophy. However, what interests us in the context of the passage as a whole is the moral evaluation of the Jews.

Aristotle argued that anyone who failed to realize ethical principles in his personal life was not worthy of the title “philosopher.” Such people could be called at best “philosophizers” (οἱ φιλοσοφοῦντες), or something similar.⁶⁸ Theophrastus has his own variation. A testimonium attests to his distinguishing between “philosopher” and “true philosopher.” The testimonium survives in Arabic in a commentary on Aristotle’s *Categories*, written by Abū l-Faraj ibn al-Ṭayyib, a Nestorian monk and physician who was active in Baghdad in the first half of the eleventh century. He wrote commentaries on several of Aristotle’s books and on a work by Theophrastus. The testimonium runs as follows:⁶⁹

There is another group headed by Theophrastus that claimed (i.e., Theophrastus says)⁷⁰ that the beginning [of philosophy] should be in the sciences of values (ethics), and used this reasoning: they thought (i.e., Theophrastus thinks) that a man must above all train his soul and habituate it to good customs and let it act in noble

Theophrastus did not need such a rumor, and it is a little too speculative to attribute to him such a combination of issues on a Jewish matter that has no bearing on the arguments of his book. At the same time, I would add that these three features were not standard in the descriptions of groups of philosopher-priests. Particular features and activities were attributed to each group.

67. See Pulleyn (1997) 7–14, 161–63.

68. See, e.g., Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics* 1095a2 ff. On “philosophers,” see, e.g., Aristotle *EN* 1098b16–18; cf. the distinction made by Dicaearchus between the wise of the past and the philosophers of his time; see Wehrli (1944) 29, 30 (= Mithardý [2000] fr. 37, 43).

69. See the text in Fortenbaugh et al. (1992) 2: no. 466b. On the translation of Theophrastus into Arabic, see Gutas (1992) 63–102.

70. The source quoting Theophrastus read οἱ περὶ Θεόφραστον, which is a normal way of expressing “Theophrastus himself.” The translator understood the expression literally as “those around Theophrastus.” Cf. no. 466a in vol. 1 of the collection of Fortenbaugh (1992), taken from another Arabic source. It begins: “As to the family of Theophrastus, they think that a man should begin with the theory of correcting behavior.”

things . . . and they (i.e., Theophrastus) also adduce as evidence the words of Plato⁷¹ that the true philosopher⁷² is the one who exercises himself beautifully and habituates his soul to worthy customs, and not the one who preserves [in his memory] opinions (of others) or the one who solves doubts.

The distinction inferred from this may be illustrated by two parallels: Posidonius of Apamea, following his predecessors, calls the Druids, who he says are in charge of human sacrifice, “the philosophers among the Gauls” (in Diod. 5. 31. 2. 4, 31. 3);⁷³ the moral image of the Magi, the “philosophers” among the Persians, was rather low in the Greek world. The story about the conspiracy of the Magi (the rebellion of Smerdis) after the death of Cambyses, made famous by the detailed account of Herodotus (3. 61ff.), attributed to them deceit and cruelty. The Persian celebration in memory of the killing of the Magi (*magophonia*) was also well known in the Greek world.⁷⁴ Moreover, Greek authors used the term “Magi” to denote any type of tricksters or charlatans.⁷⁵

To conclude the discussion of the description of the Jews as “philosophers” and of their activities, the question still pending is, why was this description placed in the context of the passage on Jewish sacrificial practices, itself part of the argument against the eating and sacrificing of animals? It has been suggested that Theophrastus wished to say that a nation of philosophers was actually reluctant to sacrifice animals.⁷⁶ We have already seen, however, that their shame stems not from the sacrifice itself but from its mode of execution. One does not need to be a philosopher to be ashamed of this. In any case, the term “philosophers” in Theophrastus does not imply proper moral judgment. It seems that Theophrastus, who gave the Jews a certain role in his argumentation and possibly also in his anthropological theory by and large, just wished to give his Greek reader some idea of who these people were.

. . .

71. Such explicit statements were not written by Plato in his dialogues, although they may be deduced from the various comments made by his Socrates. Sayings (*apophthegmata*) of philosophers were brought together in collections and could have reached Theophrastus even by oral tradition. This may even be an apocryphal saying. Similar comments were made by Polemo of Athens (end of the fourth century) according to Diogenes Laertius 4. 18, although they are not directed specifically at philosophers.

72. The original would appear to have read ὁ τῶ ὄντι φιλόσοφος or ὁ ὡς ἀληθῶς φιλόσοφος.

73. On the Posidonian source for the Gallic excursus of Diodorus, see Kidd 2: 308 ff. On the Druids as “philosophers among the Gauls,” cf. Diogenes Laertius 1. 1; Clement *Stromateis* 1. 15 [71. 4].

74. The sources are in Clemen (1928) 512–13.

75. See Bickerman and Tadmor (1978) 251, and the sources there. On the Magi in classical literature, see de Jong (1997).

76. So Bickerman (1988) 16.

Theophrastus's account of the Jews is thus morally negative, but intellectually positive. He does not seem to have bothered to acquire accurate information about the Jews but relied on common rumors and hearsay, partly hostile, partly imaginary, mostly coming from Egypt. After all, the role of the Jews was only to serve as an illustration for Theophrastus's anthropological theory, itself intended to help justify his opposition to the sacrificing and eating of animals. Theophrastus had no personal interest in the Jews as such and had no personal feelings toward them. The account well reflects the lack of real knowledge the Greeks of his generation had about the rather isolated community in the Judean hills.

THE IMPACT OF THE PASSAGE

Because of his high standing in the Hellenistic world of thought and science, and because he is the first author to refer to the Jews in some detail, Theophrastus must have had some influence on the formation of Greek opinion regarding the Jewish people at the beginning of the Hellenistic period. The description of the Jews as philosophers, for example, by Clearchus and Megasthenes may have been influenced by Theophrastus, although they could have been relying rather on the same prevalent rumors as had Theophrastus himself. The Theophrastean Jewish sacrifice may also have inspired the partially preserved reference by Hecataeus to the exclusive and unique nature of the Jewish sacrifice (Diod. 40. 3. 4), if the latter was not directly influenced by Egyptian informers.⁷⁷

However, there is no further echo of Theophrastus's account in references to the Jews until the time of Porphyry, not even in Josephus and Clement, who took such pains to trace references to the Jews in Greek authors. This is to be explained by the transmission of the writings of Theophrastus, on the one hand, and their vast quantity, on the other. His writings were passed from one private collection to another and were even hidden for a long time, so that they were not worked on until the first century B.C.E., when Sulla transferred them to Rome. There they were edited, corrected, and copied and began slowly to circulate.⁷⁸ During the two and a half centuries in which the Jewish stereotypes took shape,

77. On this matter, see below pp. 117 and 132.

78. See esp. Strabo 13. 1. 51; Plutarch *Sulla* 26; Porphyry *Vita Plotini* 24. The information refers to Aristotle and Theophrastus together. There has been much debate on the accuracy of the detailed information given by Strabo, especially concerning the disappearance of the writings of Aristotle. Some believe that there were still copies available in Athens, albeit unread by philosophers of that period, who preferred to argue with their contemporaries on problems of concern to them. On the fate of Aristotle's writings in that period, see esp. Gigon (1959); Chroust (1962); Moreaux (1973) 1: 20–30; Guthrie (1981) 6: 59–65; Sandbach (1985); Blum (1991) 53–64; Wilker (2002). The subject is also discussed here and there in the collection of articles edited by Fortenbaugh and Steinmetz (1989) esp. 23–73. It is interesting that even Cicero, in the middle of the first century B.C.E., was still not directly

the writings of Theophrastus were virtually unavailable to most writers. Later, the sheer quantity of his literary output seems to have presented an obstacle (see the enormous list of his works in Diog. Laert. 5. 45–50), although *Peri eusebeias* became quite influential at the end of the Roman period.⁷⁹ The passage on the Jews (and possibly another reference) was just a drop in the ocean, easily lost to view, and Theophrastus's views on the Jews would have been looked for naturally in his writings on laws.⁸⁰ Porphyry was able to trace the passage because he had collected material for his work on vegetarianism, quoting and paraphrasing from *Peri eusebeias*, and besides, was especially interested in Jewish matters. His relatively extensive writing on Jews and Judaism is one of the main factors drawing Eusebius's attention to Porphyry's work. Eusebius in his *Praeparatio evangelica* (9. 1. 3) says explicitly that he found the passage in Porphyry's *On Abstemion*. Due to the accidental nature of the preservation of Hellenistic literature, it is impossible to arrive at more definite conclusions.

. . .

The prevailing conception in modern research on Theophrastus's attitude toward the Jews is that he praised and even admired them. This interpretation originated with Bernays and other scholars of former generations who seized upon any thinker in times past who said, or appeared to say, positive things about the Jews. Presumably this is why they overlooked the major negative statement of Theophrastus's account that the Jews were the first to perform human sacrifice, as well as the logical and historical difficulties arguing against the received reading ζφoθυτοῦσι (sacrifice animals). This reservation is not to detract from the great achievements of these scholars. Their achievements are to be appreciated all the more in view of the political, cultural, and material obstacles and pressures they had to face.⁸¹ Even good old Homer drops off occasionally.

acquainted with the writings of Theophrastus, but only indirectly through the lectures of Antiochus of Ascalon; see Cicero *De Finibus* 5. 1, 8.

79. On which, see esp. Obbink (1988) 273.

80. See pp. 16–17 above.

81. A good example is Jacob Bernays, the scholar who placed research of *Peri eusebeia* on a solid footing. The son of the orthodox rabbi of Hamburg, Bernays adhered to his religious education and faith despite all the pressures put upon him, including his ineligibility for an ordinary university appointment. Considering the internal and external tensions to which he was subject, it is easy to understand the great effort he devoted to squaring Theophrastus's account with Jewish sources, and why this outstanding philologist did not pick up on the negative aspects of the passage. His inclination to square Theophrastus with the Jewish sources may also be explained by his great familiarity with the latter, that degree of expertise that sometimes encourages one to find parallels where they do not exist. On Jacob Bernays, see the biographical articles of Toury, Orbach, and Glucker in Glucker and Laks (1996) 3–56.