Introduction

Behold, a people who will dwell alone,
And will not be reckoned among the nations.
(Numbers 23.9)

1.1 A Distinguished People

Balaam’s oracle, cited above, encapsulates the sense of distinction which lies at the heart of the Jewish tradition. When, in the third century BCE, the Septuagint translators rendered this prophecy into Greek, they did not alter its sense, although they ‘modernized’ much else in the accompanying oracles. Their conservatism is striking: they were translating for a Jewish community not at all geographically segregated, but already well established in the cosmopolitan city of Alexandria. What did it mean for Jews in Alexandria, or in other Diaspora locations, to consider themselves ‘a people who will dwell alone’? In what sense, if any, were they distinguished in their local environments? And, if Jewish distinction was preserved, how was it expressed, maintained and validated?

Two Jews from the Mediterranean Diaspora suggest answers to such questions in their exegesis of Balaam’s oracle. The first is Philo, an Alexandrian Jewish philosopher of the early first century CE, a man steeped in Hellenistic culture but also resolutely faithful to the Jewish community. In recounting the story of Balaam, Philo has the seer add an important interpretative gloss to his blessing of this ‘people who will dwell alone’. According to Philo’s Balaam, their separation will not be territorial (‘by the demarcation of land’) but will be effected by

the particularity of their exceptional customs, not mixing with others to alter the ancestral ways. (Mos 1.278)
For Philo, Jewish distinction could not be a matter of geography. By his time Jews had lived in Alexandria alongside Greeks and Egyptians for centuries, and he had no reason to doubt that they would remain there for centuries to come. But even in continual social interaction with non-Jews it was possible, and necessary, to retain frontiers, social boundaries constituted by the Jews' 'exceptional customs'. It was through such customs that Jews 'lived alone', not in isolation from 'other nations' but in a careful regulation of social intercourse designed to maintain the sense of 'otherness'. Such customs constituted the 'ancestral ways' (τὰ πάτρια), that precious heritage which represented the ethnic continuity of this distinguished people. Difference was an inheritance, a legacy from one's forebears to be bequeathed to generations to come.

Philo's interpretation of Balaam thus focuses on the Jews' social distinction. But it invites a host of questions. What were the 'exceptional customs' which functioned as social boundaries in Alexandria or elsewhere in the Diaspora, and how did they serve to demarcate Jewish social space? What sort of communities were created to mark out and police these boundaries? Were all Diaspora Jews as committed as Philo to such 'ancestral ways', and did no one 'mix with' others to the extent of altering their inheritance? In general, how did Diaspora Jews adapt to their local environments and what sorts of assimilation took place? How did local political and social conditions affect Jewish communities, and how did these vary through history and from place to place? To the extent that 'the ancestral ways' were preserved in the Diaspora, what effect did their preservation have on other groups in the complex social interactions of the Graeco-Roman world?

A second interpretation of Balaam's oracle is offered by Josephus, a Palestinian aristocrat required to take up residence in the Diaspora (Rome) at the end of the first century CE. Josephus' paraphrase of Balaam's oracles (Ant 4.114–17) suggests another sense of 'distinction'. Here Balaam pronounces the happiness of this people,

to whom God gives possession of myriad blessings and has granted his own providence as perpetual ally and guide. For there is no human race which you will not be adjudged to excel in virtue and in the pursuit of the most excellent customs, pure from evil; and such things you will bequeath to children better than yourselves, God watching over you
alone among humankind and providing you with the means by which you may become the happiest of all people under the sun. (Ant 4.114)

Although Josephus also highlights Jewish customs, he interprets the singularity of ‘the people who will dwell alone’ not simply as social difference but also as moral pre-eminence and historical privilege. For Josephus, Jews are a distinguished nation, ‘not reckoned among other nations’, because they are morally on a different plane: they ‘excel in virtue’, their ‘excellent customs’ marking not just a social but also an ethical differentiation. Moreover, they have a unique relationship with God and a special claim on his providence by which they are assured a glorious destiny.

Josephus’ view of Jewish distinction invites us to pay attention to the ways in which Jews in the Diaspora situated themselves in their social and cultural contexts. Did all Diaspora Jews share Josephus’ sense of the Jews’ moral superiority? In what respects could they understand themselves to ‘excel in virtue’, and wherein lay their critique of their host environments? How did other Diaspora Jews depict the relationship between their people and God, and how did they view other ethnic groups? Josephus’ key terms, ‘virtue’ (ἁρετή) and ‘providence’ (πρόνοια), are in fact derived not from his Scriptural but from his Hellenistic education. What sort of acculturation did he and other Diaspora Jews undergo? In what respects, and to what degree, did they merge Jewish and non-Jewish cultural traditions, and how did they employ such cultural syntheses? If, despite this acculturation, Josephus and others maintained their Jewish distinction, how did they appropriate and re-employ the Hellenism they absorbed?

Balaam’s oracle, with its divergent interpretations in Philo and Josephus, thus poses some key questions about the social and cultural strategies of Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora. In fact the difference at this point between Philo and Josephus suggests that another dimension of ‘distinction’ must also be explored: the distinctions between Diaspora Jews. Jews lived in many different geographical locations, in social conditions which varied over time, and at differing social levels. We can expect to find an almost infinite variety in the ways they reacted to their variant milieux. In fact, if we canvassed Philo’s and Josephus’ works as a whole, the differences we have noted would not prove to be symptoms of a wholly divergent outlook: Philo also thinks that Jews are morally
and providentially distinguished (e.g. *Spec Leg* 4.179–80; *Legatio* 3–4), while Josephus, like Philo, regards the ancestral customs as crucial for maintaining social difference (e.g. *Ant* 1.192). But in other respects Philo and Josephus differ markedly, and we cannot assume that either is necessarily representative of others. Jews were spread in very large numbers over the Mediterranean world, in diverse and ever changing social contexts, ranging in status from the impoverished field-hand to the millionaire imperial favourite. Clearly no single piece of evidence can be taken to represent Diaspora Judaism as a whole.

### 1.2 Current Study of the Diaspora

Our reluctance to generalize about such a complex and variegated phenomenon as the Mediterranean Diaspora reflects an important characteristic of current scholarship on post-biblical Judaism. Jonathan Smith captures the present mood when he advocates abandoning the notion of an ‘essence’ of early Judaism and proposes ‘a dismantling of the old theological and imperialistic impulse toward totalization, unification, and integration’. ‘The cartography appears far messier. We need to map the variety of Judaisms, each a shifting cluster of characteristics which vary over time’ (1980:19–20). This emphasis on plurality (‘Judaisms’) derives partly from greater attention to detail in recent studies of Judaism, partly also from our contemporary environment, with its multiple expressions of Judaism. Whether or not we use the plural ‘Judaisms’ in relation to the Diaspora, the range and diversity of the historical evidence certainly indicate that no normative unity can be assumed. In fact, the present generation has seen a flowering of innovative study of Diaspora Jews and Judaism, making research in this field immensely rewarding. In order to gain a longer perspective on

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1 Probably several million by the first century CE, but it is impossible to give even approximate figures. Harnack (1908:4–9) and Juster (1914:1.209–12) were probably right to suggest that vastly more Jews lived in the Diaspora than in the homeland, though their calculations of the total number of Jews in the Roman empire differed (Harnack: 4 to 4.5 million; Juster: 6 to 7 million). They are necessarily dependent on Philo’s unreliable figure of 1 million Egyptian Jews (*Flacc* 43) and Josephus’ notoriously wayward statistics (cf. *Bell* 2.561 and 7.368). Suitable caution on this matter is expressed by Tcherikover in *CPJ* 1.4 and Stern 1974:119, 122.
our work, it will be helpful to survey some of the achievements of the last century of Diaspora scholarship.²

The decades either side of the turn of the twentieth century were characterized by a new rigour in historical and literary studies, culminating in the extraordinary achievements of the History of Religions School. In this period texts long known were newly edited or subjected to historical and philological analysis of a wholly new order: Jacob Bernays’ study of Pseudo-Phocylides (1885, originally published in 1856) and J. Geffcken’s edition of the Sibylline Oracles (1902b) may serve as two outstanding examples in our field. The massive industry of historical scholarship in these years is symbolized by Emil Schürer’s Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi (evolving through successive editions from 1874 to 1909) and Jean Juster’s Les juifs dans l’Empire Romain (1914). To this day scholars such as Hugo Willrich and Isaac Heinemann (see Bibliography) remain unsurpassed in their acquaintance with the primary sources and the acuteness of their historical perceptions, even if their conceptual frameworks sometimes now appear dated or even distorted.

But those decades also witnessed the discovery of new data which greatly stimulated Diaspora scholarship. In particular, newly discovered papyri from Egypt opened up fresh perspectives on Jewish existence there, and archaeological discoveries, most notably of the synagogue at Dura Europos and the catacombs in Rome, revealed hitherto unknown facets of Diaspora life. Inevitably it took time for such discoveries to become fully absorbed into the discipline, and they may be said to have had their first definitive treatments in three works produced either side of the Second World War. First, Jean-Baptiste Frey edited the Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum (=CJJ, vol. 1, 1936, updated by Lifshitz 1975; vol. 2, 1952), gathering inscriptions old and new for the first time in a comprehensive (though not entirely adequate) collection. Secondly, Victor Tcherikover and Alexander Fuks presented the Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum in three magnificent volumes, full of significant comment on each text (=CPF, 1957–1964, the last two volumes published after Tcherikover’s death in 1958). Thirdly, Erwin Goodenough produced his Jewish Symbols in the Graeco-Roman Period (13 volumes, 1953–68), a massive, and in some respects

² For an assessment of recent trends in the study of Judaism in general see Kraft and Nickelsburg 1986.
maverick, attempt to prove the presence in the Diaspora of a Hellenized, non-rabbinic and mystical Judaism.

The generation after the Second World War was in some respects a quiet period for Diaspora studies, not least because the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls absorbed attention and focused scholarly interest on Palestinian Judaism. In one respect, however, this was a crucial transitional period, for it brought about the collapse of the old scholarly schema in which the ‘Hellenistic Judaism’ of the Diaspora had been sharply distinguished from the ‘rabbinic’ or ‘normative’ Judaism of Palestine. Goodenough’s study was conducted largely within the old framework, and in conflict with those, like Wolfson (1948), who had attempted to squeeze Diaspora evidence into a ‘rabbinic’ mould. The schema was decisively shattered, however, by Martin Hengel’s Judaism and Hellenism (1974, first German edition 1968), which indicated that Palestine was ‘Hellenized’ to some degree from a very early period, and that one cannot draw simple geographical frontiers around a cultural phenomenon like ‘Hellenization’. Also in this generation many old stereotypes were demolished, like the notion that Philo’s Hellenized Judaism was in some sense debased (see Sandmel 1956), or that Diaspora Judaism failed to exert any social or religious attraction after the rise of Christianity (Simon 1986, first published in 1948). Moreover, with the contribution of noted classicists such as Elias Bickerman and Arnaldo Momigliano (see Bibliography), it was possible to view Jewish existence in the Graeco-Roman world in a wider historical perspective. Mary Smallwood’s classic, The Jews under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian (1981, first edition 1976), synthesized much of the historical work to date, providing a valuable conspectus of political realities both in Palestine and in the Diaspora.

In the last twenty-five years the momentum of research on Judaism in the Hellenistic-Roman period has gathered pace to an extraordinary degree, and has borne much fruit in Diaspora studies. The re-edition of Schürer, updated by a team of Jewish and Christian scholars (1973–87), and the publishing of the multi-confessional Compendia Rerum Judaicarum ad Novum Testamentum (1974–), indicate the collaborative work being undertaken in this field. The sprouting of new monograph series, journals and academic centres, and the creation of the electronic bulletin-board IOUDAIOS, also demonstrate the new surge of energy. Although some textbooks largely limit their treatment of ‘Judaism’ to its history and literature in Palestine (e.g. Sanders 1992; Grabbe 1992;
Wright 1992:145–338), very important advances have been made specifically in the study of Diaspora Judaism, on which this book is heavily dependent. We may divide these into four categories:

1. In the first instance, the non-literary sources have gained new prominence either through new editions of old material or through the discovery and publication of new finds. The Jewish inscriptions from Egypt have been magnificently re-edited by William Horbury and David Noy (1992), and the latter has also produced an equivalent volume of material from Western Europe (1993). These have now eclipsed the relevant parts of Frey's *CIJ*, while Gert Lüderitz has published a definitive edition of old and new inscriptional material from Cyrenaica (1983). Not surprisingly, such evidence is beginning to play a prominent part in new studies of the Diaspora (van der Horst 1991; van Henten and van der Horst 1994). But there have also taken place new archaeological discoveries which have given enormous stimulus to scholarship, notably the synagogue at Sardis (see Seager and Kraabel 1983) and the *stele* listing Jews and ‘God-fearers’ at Aphrodisias (Reynolds and Tannenbaum 1987). These, together with occasional new papyri, have helped to re-open old questions and have required scholars to revise many former assumptions about relations between Jews and Gentiles in the Diaspora.

2. The past twenty-five years have also seen a flurry of editions and translations of Diaspora literature bringing it better into the scholarly mainstream. Carl Holladay's editions of fragmentary texts (1983, 1989), Pieter van der Horst's edition of Pseudo-Phocylides (1978), and Howard Jacobson's of the *Exagoge* by Ezekiel (1983) are just three examples of many in this field, while the scholarly industry on Josephus and Philo has witnessed phenomenal growth. Previously inaccessible texts have also been made more widely available by the appearance of large-scale collections in translation, such as *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Charlesworth 1983, 1985) and the series *Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit* (ed. Kümmel et al., 1973– ). Meanwhile, Menahem Stern's monumental *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (3 volumes, 1974–84) has provided an invaluable resource for the study of attitudes towards Jews in the Graeco-Roman world (replacing Reinach 1895).

3. There have also begun to appear new full-length investigations of Jews in particular Diaspora locations. Shimon Applebaum's study of
Jews in Cyrene (1979) was the first in this series, though it is soon to be supplemented or replaced by a volume promised from Gert Lüderitz (announced in Lüderitz 1994:212 n.74). Egyptian Jews were the subject of a full-length, though problematic, study by Aryeh Kasher (1985), and their history has been surveyed in an engaging manner by Joseph Mélèze Modrzejewski (1991). Paul Trebilco has published a fine study of Jewish communities in Asia Minor (1991), on which topic more is due to appear by Irina Levinskaya (1996). Finally the older work on Roman Jews by Harry Leon (1960) has been updated in relation to the third and fourth centuries CE by Leonard Rutgers (1995).

4. Alongside such foundational work in the study of texts and local conditions, the present scholarly climate is characterized by a refreshing *willingness to reopen old questions* and a strong resistance to patterns of consensus inherited from the past. Several important trends have emerged which have helped to refocus scholarly activity. We may mention just four:

(i) A new critical spirit abounds which resists the temptation to fill the gaps in our evidence, and questions the adequacy and accuracy of the evidence we possess. Scholars are now unwilling to take sources on trust, or to transfer conclusions drawn from one Diaspora site to another. The new scholarly mood rightly demands humility in the face of our ignorance, even when new evidence fills in parts of hitherto enormous gaps.

(ii) As we have already noted, there is a corresponding resistance to hidden assumptions of a unitary or univocal Judaism. The Diaspora cannot be assumed to be congruent with the thought and practice of Jews in Palestine, nor can Philo be taken to represent the views of all 'Hellenistic Jews'. John Collins' survey of Diaspora literature, *Between Athens and Jerusalem* (1986), nicely reflects this mood, suggesting that Diaspora Jews defined their identity in many different ways, some national and political, some ethical, philosophical or even mystical. The wide range of literature canvassed, and the determination to let the texts define their own understanding of Judaism, signify important developments in this area. To ask how Diaspora Jews related to their social and cultural environments is now a genuinely open question, with no (or at least fewer) preconceived answers.

(iii) Particular attention has been devoted to the question of the social roles of Jews in their Diaspora environments. Old notions of 'orthodoxy' have been challenged, as well as the assumption
that faithful Jews lived largely in social isolation (Kraabel 1982). In fact, new evidence (e.g. from Sardis and Aphrodisias), together with new assessment of the old, suggests that Jews were by no means universally despised or isolated, and the mixture of philo-Jewish and anti-Jewish attitudes in the Graeco-Roman world has had to be reassessed (Gager 1983). In this connection, the existence and significance of the so-called ‘God-fearers’ has been re-examined (Kraabel 1981; Cohen 1989), as has the notion of an organized Jewish mission to Gentiles (McKnight 1991 and Goodman 1994). Louis Feldman’s massive _Jews and Gentiles in the Ancient World_ (1993) has surveyed such questions afresh, though not to the satisfaction of all.

(iv) Finally, the Jewish Diaspora is increasingly studied in relation to the wider context of Graeco-Roman society and religion. Diaspora Jews can be usefully compared with other ethnic ‘Diasporas’, and their conditions better appreciated through a deeper understanding of society, religion and culture in their particular localities (Goudriaan 1992; Cohen and Frerichs 1993). From this perspective Judaism and Christianity may also be viewed alongside each other as ambiguously related minority cults in a vast religious mosaic (Lieu, North and Rajak 1992). Indeed, precisely where to place early Christians alongside Diaspora Jews is an intriguing problem, and there are grounds for studying figures such as Paul alongside other representatives of first century CE Judaism (Tomson 1990; Segal 1990; cf. Boccaccini 1991).

These aspects of the current study of the Diaspora represent its present vitality and indicate the potential for much fresh research. They will all be seen to contribute in important ways to the present volume, whose aims and scope must now be explained.

### 1.3 The Scope, Plan and Spirit of This Study

My aim in this study is to provide a comprehensive and multi-faceted survey of Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora from 323 BCE to 117 CE. While individual studies of Diaspora texts or Diaspora locations abound, scholars and students lack at present a comprehensive survey of the field and in particular one which combines study of the history of Jewish communities in the Diaspora with analysis of the main Diaspora literature. My goal is to examine how Jews reacted to their political, social and cultural environments in the Diaspora, and
for this purpose we need to view both their social and political experiences and the varied modes of accommodation or resistance which they adopted in their lives and literature. Thus in this study I will provide a new and detailed analysis of Jewish experience in the Mediterranean Diaspora in all its well-documented locations. I will also examine afresh a range of Diaspora literature in order to illuminate the fascinating range of socio-cultural stances adopted by Diaspora Jews. In the process I have aimed not simply to gather well-established opinions, but to examine all the primary evidence anew; as a result, I will propose at several points new readings of Diaspora history and literature.

Though broad in scope, this study has to operate within certain limits. As the title indicates, my object of study is the Mediterranean Diaspora, that is, Jews outside their homeland in the territories bordering the Mediterranean Sea (thus not the eastern, Babylonian Diaspora, nor that situated on the Euxine [Black] Sea). Though this brief might still appear impossibly large, in practice the nature of the evidence available from our period of interest limits our study to a few geographical areas. There are, in fact, only five locations in the Mediterranean Diaspora in this period where our literary and/or archaeological evidence is sufficient for us to describe the Jewish Diaspora in any depth: Egypt, Cyrenaica, the province of Syria, the province of Asia and the city of Rome. Only in these locations can we provide a coherent account of the history of the Jewish communities over an extended period of time, and only here does our literary and non-literary evidence combine to give us a moderately full view of Diaspora life.

Even in these five locations, there are, as we shall see, large gaps in our knowledge, leaving huge questions unanswerable; only Egypt, in fact, gives us anything like sufficient material to describe a Diaspora community ‘in the round’. But all five stand in a clearly different category from any other Mediterranean location. As Jewish and non-Jewish sources attest, by the turn of the era Jews had spread into very many cities and islands around the Mediterranean basin.³ Besides the five locations we will study, we know that by the end of our period of study there were Jews in other provinces of Asia Minor (including Cilicia, Lycia, Pamphylia, Pisidia and Pontus), in Macedonia and Greece, in the islands of

³ The claims of Philo in *Legatio* 281–82 are more or less matched by Strabo *apud* Josephus, *Ant* 14.115 and Luke in Acts 2.9–11, though an element of hyperbole may infect them all.
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Cyprus, Crete, Rhodes, Delos, Euboea and Cos, in Illyricum and in many sites in Italy; from the second century CE onwards, we know of Jews in the North African provinces of Africa proconsularis, Numidia and Mauretania, and in Spain and southern Gaul (see Schürer 3.1–86). But in most of these places we have only tiny fragments of information – a small number of inscriptions or the odd literary reference. Valuable as is every item of evidence for the full composite picture, only in the five places named can anything approaching a satisfactory portrait be drawn. In fact, the five which we will study will prove to be sufficiently diverse to indicate how variable were the experiences and responses of Diaspora Jews.

In studying the Mediterranean Diaspora, I have chosen to impose certain chronological limits which make sense in relation to the historical evidence available. The starting-point is unproblematic. Although Jews undoubtedly lived outside their homeland for centuries before Alexander the Great, we know almost nothing about them. Alexander’s conquests redrew the Mediterranean map so drastically, and brought so many Jews into Egypt in particular, that his death in 323 BCE may sensibly mark the start of our investigation. In fact, as we shall see, it is only in Egypt that we can trace the history of Diaspora Jews for the two centuries after that point. But those two centuries produced such a flowering in Egyptian Jewish life and literature as to give us our best insights into the Hellenization of Diaspora Jews.

The end-point of our survey is rather harder to fix. In Rome there has been no ‘end’ to the Jewish Diaspora from its foundation to the present day, so that any choice of closure in a historical survey will seem somewhat arbitrary. I have chosen to finish my survey with the death of Trajan (117 CE) for two reasons: i) In this year, as we shall see, the Diaspora communities in Egypt and Cyrenaica were almost totally destroyed in the Diaspora Revolt, so that it is natural to finish the account of their history at this point. In the other Diaspora locations there was no such moment of rupture; indeed, our inscriptive evidence from Rome and Asia Minor only becomes full rather later, in the third and fourth centuries CE. But to take the story so far on would have extended this book excessively. ii) The beginning of the second century CE also happens to be the point after which our literary evidence about Diaspora Jews becomes greatly reduced. The last extant literature from the Mediterranean Diaspora is by Josephus, whose final work (Contra Apionem) dates from the very end of the first century CE. With no
subsequent narrative comparable to Josephus’, our knowledge of later Diaspora history is largely restricted to occasional comments in Christian works, besides the inscriptions and buildings unearthed by archaeology. Meanwhile, the last Roman author to give more than cursory attention to the Jews is Tacitus, who died in 120 CE. Thus the literary evidence conspires with the occasion of the Revolt in Egypt and Cyrene to suggest 117 CE as an appropriate point at which to conclude our study.

As indicated above, this survey of the Mediterranean Diaspora will combine study of the historical experiences of Diaspora Jews with analysis of the main Diaspora literature. I have had to make some choices among that literature, and will include here the products of thirteen authors, which are both important in themselves and extant in sufficient quantity to be worth thorough analysis. Josephus and Philo will of course take their place in this canon, but I will endeavour to prevent their massive literary output from dominating the rest. Of the fragmentary works, I will study only those which survive in substantial quantity, namely Artapanus, Aristobulus and Ezekiel. From other Jewish literature which definitely originates in the Diaspora I have chosen to discuss The Letter of Aristeas, Wisdom of Solomon, 3 and 4 Maccabees, Pseudo-Phocylides, Joseph and Aseneth, and Books 3 and 5 of The Sibylline Oracles. I will take Paul as one further example in the spectrum of Diaspora Jews, although he will prove to be a fascinatingly anomalous figure.

Much other Jewish literature from our period cannot be sited for certain in the Diaspora. Nonetheless, of the works which almost certainly do belong to the Diaspora I have had to omit Demetrius, the Pseudo-Philo sermons, the poetic forgeries, the Testament of Abraham and some other Sibylline Oracles⁴. Other literature was translated into Greek in or for the Greek-speaking Diaspora, such as Esther, Sirach and, of course, the Septuagint. The latter would certainly repay close attention as a work of Diaspora literature and theology in its own right, but the scale and complexity of such an analysis prohibits its inclusion here. I hope that what follows will stimulate others to pursue comparable studies of other Diaspora literature, and I would excuse my omissions with Voltaire’s dictum that ‘the surest way to be boring is in striving to be exhaustive!’

⁴ Other works which might originate in the Diaspora include: The Testament of Job, Philo the Epic Poet, Pseudo-Eupolemus, Pseudo-Hecataeus, Cleodemus (Malchus) and Theodotus. See the discussion of each in Schürer vol. 3.
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The *structure of this book* reflects my aim to combine historical study of Diaspora communities with analysis of Jews’ varied responses to their environments. Ideally, one would study each location separately, comparing history, literature and non-literary local evidence; but in practice that is only possible with regard to Egypt. Elsewhere in the Diaspora our evidence is simply too patchy, and the extant literature can rarely be assigned with certainty to any single location. Thus the nature and variable scale of the evidence requires the division of this book into two uneven parts, Part One focusing on the Diaspora in Egypt, and Part Two on the Diaspora in other Mediterranean sites.

Part One will begin with a fresh study of the history of Egyptian Jews from 323 BCE to 117 CE, divided into the Ptolemaic and the Roman eras (chapters 2 and 3 respectively). Before embarking on an analysis of Jews’ reactions to their Egyptian milieu, it will be necessary to discuss and define our analytical tools for this task (chapter 4), in particular indicating some heuristic distinctions between assimilation, acculturation and accommodation (chapter 4.4). On this basis we may then survey the spectrum in the assimilation of Egyptian Jews (chapter 5) and offer new readings of their most important surviving literature (chapters 6 and 7). The literature here investigated will be divided into two categories, cultural convergence (chapter 6) and cultural antagonism (chapter 7), reflecting the variety of stances adopted by Jews in their Graeco-Egyptian environment.

Part Two (*The Diaspora in Other Mediterranean Sites*) will follow the same pattern as Part One, though now covering more than one location. First we will consider afresh the history of the Jewish communities in our four other locations, Cyrenaica and Syria (chapter 8), the province of Asia (chapter 9) and the city of Rome (chapter 10). We will then gather together the limited material from these and other sites to investigate, first, the levels of assimilation among Diaspora Jews outwith Egypt (chapter 11) and, secondly, the selected literature which is not definitely, or which is definitely not, of Egyptian provenance (chapters 12 and 13).

Thus Parts One and Two of this volume correspond in shape, moving from historical survey through the assessment of levels of assimilation to analysis of the relevant literature. The final section (Part Three) adds another facet to our survey of the Mediterranean Diaspora, here drawing on the sources previously discussed to offer a sketch of Jewish identity in the Diaspora. Although there are some topics which cannot be treated here (such as community
organization and the attraction of sympathizers and proselytes), I will delineate in outline what I consider the features of Jewish life which helped define and preserve Jewish communities over the period we are studying. At several points in our study special problems could merit more detailed investigation, but I will employ an Excursus only once, in chapter 3, where space is required to discuss the legal status of Alexandrian Jews. To avoid cluttering our discussions with argumentation about the dating of texts, I will include that and other technical material in an Appendix on Sources.

Finally, it remains to say something about the spirit in which this project has been conducted. I have made it my priority to become familiar with primary sources, whose reading and analysis has been my greatest pleasure. I have endeavoured to familiarize myself with the chief scholarly literature, but cannot claim comprehensive coverage of this vast field of scholarship. Experts in particular specialisms (e.g. Philo and Josephus) will no doubt find omissions in the secondary literature cited, though I trust they will also share my aim to stimulate readers to explore the primary sources for themselves. I have given my own translations in all cases.

I am not so naive as to imagine that historiography can be a wholly disinterested occupation. Historians inevitably, and properly, work within the framework of the social and cultural issues of their day, and as those issues change so do perspectives on the historical sources. If it is accompanied by critical self-awareness, that hermeneutical reality by no means invalidates historical research, but rather gives it inspiration and direction. This volume is influenced by many factors in the contemporary social scene, but none so important as the need to foster respect and tolerance for minority ethnic groups, in the face of the complex problems created by modern social pluralism. I have gained from a number of studies of minority groups in both ancient and modern history, though not all have been referred to here. My focus on the Jewish Diaspora stems from a combination of three motivating factors. In the first place, the Jewish Diaspora has proved throughout history a ‘paradigm case’ of minority endurance in an alien context and still today provides resources for reflection on ethnic identity and the preservation of particularity (see e.g. Boyarin 1994:228–60). Secondly, my previous work on early Christianity indicated the importance of the Mediterranean Diaspora in understanding the social and theological development of the early Christian movement; indeed, I remain convinced that a proper appreciation
of the Diaspora is vital for comprehending much about the first Christians and the fateful split between Christianity and Judaism. I thus hope that this volume will be of value to students of both Judaism and early Christianity, and hope to follow it myself with a comparative study of Pauline churches. Thirdly, the labour devoted to this study is undoubtedly influenced by the terrible experiences of Jews in the European Diaspora in this century: we all live and work under the shadow of the Holocaust.

The concern for tolerance cuts in many directions and is reflected in my unwillingness to use the pejorative term ‘pagan’ with respect to non-Jews. Readers may also notice my decision to capitalize the word ‘God’ in all contexts, whether in reference to the God of Jews or the God/Gods of Gentiles. While the linguistic arguments on this matter are indecisive (is ‘God’ a proper name or a title?), I have felt it better to equalize all parties in this matter, rather than succumb to the Jewish and Christian presumption that only their Deity is truly ‘God’, while the rest are merely ‘gods’ (or worse). As we shall see, Jewish theology and religious practice were often as offensive to Gentiles as the other way around. Of course no stance here is truly ‘objective’, since ‘tolerance’ and ‘respect’ are just as value-laden as is any more particularized commitment. But I think I know which is more conducive to that ‘civilized behaviour’ (καλοκαγαθία) which Josephus identified as the only basis on which a pluralist society can survive (Ant 16.177–78).

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5 ‘Pagan’ was employed in a pejorative sense by the early Christians and retains, in popular usage, derogatory connotations of primitive or even godless religion. Ironically, Jews and Christians learned their most sophisticated theology from ‘pagans’!

6 The presence of the article does not decide the matter in Greek, since θεός and δ ὁ θεός can be used interchangeably in our sources. Nor can we usefully distinguish between singular ‘God’ and plural ‘gods’, since Greek and Roman authors can vary their usage when referring to the same entity. In the Jewish and Christian tradition ‘God’ has become, in practice, a proper name, in default of the real (unpronounceable) name of the Deity; but the term originated as a title. It would be possible to standardize usage by employing the lower case ‘god’ or ‘gods’ throughout, but I prefer to use the upper case since it customarily conveys respect for the beliefs and practices of the relevant worshippers.