

CHAPTER 2

Promoting the Torah: Mission-Commitment Amongst the Jewish Faithful

It was stated in the introduction that an investigation into mission does not end merely with evidence of explicit ‘evangelization’ (to use McKnight’s term), rather, it must take into account the full range of activities which intentionally contribute to the goal of mission – the conversion of non-believers. As will become clear in the following section, when these other activities are brought into our discussion, the mission orientation of ancient Judaism(s) is brought into sharp focus. For it emerges that the desire to see Gentiles converted to the worship of Yahweh was a concern not only of particular Jewish teachers who engaged in proselytizing, but of Jewish believers more generally who expressed what might be called *mission-commitment*.

1. Mission-commitment as ethical apologetic

In Exodus 19:6 the Jewish people are described as a ‘priestly kingdom’ (מְמַלְכָה כֹּהֲנִים / βασίλειον ἱεράτευμα), a unique noun phrase indicating both Israel’s special relation to God and her place among the nations as the mediator of God’s presence,¹ as noted by most commentators.² Noth writes:

¹ The concept of Israel as a nation of priests and ‘ministers’ in relation to the nations emerges again in Isa 61:6 in the context of the eschatological pilgrimage motif: “but you shall be called priests of the LORD, you shall be named ministers of our God (מְשַׁרְתֵי אֱלֹהֵינוּ / LXX λειτουργοὶ θεοῦ); you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory.”

² Noth, *Exodus*, 157; McNeile, *Exodus*, 111; Cole, *Exodus*, 145; Durham, *Exodus* 3, 263; Childs, *Exodus*, 367; Cassuto, *Exodus*, 227. That the phrase also describes Israel as a nation ruled not by politicians but by priests within the nation (so Durham, *Exodus*, 263) is questionable.

Israel is to have the role of the priestly member in the number of earthly states. Israel is to have the special privilege of priests, to be allowed to ‘draw near’ God, and is to do ‘service’ for all the world ... this is the purpose for which Israel has been chosen.³

What is especially significant, in terms of the present discussion, is that the priestly function of the nation is entirely dependent upon the Torah-obedience of the people, as indicated by the conditional clause introducing the three epithets (‘treasured possession’; ‘priestly kingdom’; ‘holy nation’): “Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be ...” (19:5). Thus, it is only as the nation exercises covenant faithfulness to God that it will fulfill its *raison d’être* as a ‘priestly kingdom’.

A similar connection between the Torah-obedience of Israel and influence among the Gentiles emerges in several texts of the second temple period, where it relates specifically to the winning of Gentiles to the worship of God,⁴ something which, it must be noted, is not explicit in Exod 19:6 itself.

1.1. Testament of Levi 14.1-4

In a speech probably directed (primarily) at the priestly class among Jews (perhaps of the late Maccabean period⁵), the aged ‘Levi’ says to his sons:

And now, my children, I know from the writings of Enoch that in the end-time you will act impiously against the Lord, setting your hands to every evil deed; because of you, your brothers will be humiliated and among all the nations you shall become the occasion for scorn. For your father, Israel, is pure with respect to all the impieties of the chief priests, as heaven is pure above the earth; and you should be the lights of Israel [text α adds “for all the nations”] as the sun and the moon. For what will all the nations do if you become darkened with impiety? You will bring down a curse on our nation, because you want to destroy the light of the Law which was granted to you for the enlightenment of every man.

³ Noth, *Exodus*, 157.

⁴ This point is conceded by McKnight, *Light*, 67-68, who writes: “This form of converting Gentiles is a consistent feature of the evidence and probably formed the very backbone for the majority of conversions to Judaism.” Nevertheless, to avoid the implication that this concession points to a missionary orientation within Judaism, McKnight suggests that the relation between the good life and conversion was “probably unconscious” for Jews themselves. The evidence set out below, however, proves otherwise.

⁵ So H. C. Kee in *OTP* 1, 793 (note 14).

Here the Israelites – and probably especially the Levites – are warned to avoid ‘impiety’ (ἀσεβεία) and are urged to pursue obedience to the Law so that they might shine before the nations. If this warning is not heeded, the Torah’s light, which Israel is to reflect, will become darkened, leaving the nations in the desperate state of being denied the ‘enlightenment’ (‘of every man’), for which the Law had been given to Israel. The missionary import of the text is clear. Israel’s godly life is the means by which the nations of the world become enlightened with respect to the law of God.

1.2. Testament of Benjamin 8.2-3

Similar ideas emerge in two texts from the *Testament of Benjamin*. In *T. Benj.* 8.3 the writer describes the power of a good life to influence those who run after evil:

He [the good man] has no pollution in his heart, because upon him is resting the spirit of God. For just as the sun is unpolluted, though it touches dung and slime, but dries up both and drives off the bad odor, so also the pure mind, though involved with the corruptions of earth, edifies instead and is not itself corrupted.

The reference to the shining of the ‘sun’ recalls, or at least reflects, the statement in *T. Levi* 14.3-4 and probably represents a shared understanding of obedience to the Law as a reflection of the Torah-light itself, a motif that finds its roots in the Isaianic biblical tradition (Isa 2:5, 51:4, 59:10, 60:3). Here in *T. Benj.*, however, the metaphor of the ‘sun’ is stretched to refer to the power of the obedient life to build up another (οἰκοδομέω⁶). Not only is the pure person uncontaminated by the impurities of the world, he is able to purify those so tainted.

It is not immediately clear whether the reference here is to Gentiles or simply to wayward Jews. It is possible the author just means that an obedient Jew is able to reform his fellow, albeit disobedient, co-religionist. However, the use of μασμός (‘corruption’) to describe the people whom the godly man edifies strongly suggests a reference to Gentiles, since throughout the LXX this term⁷ and its cognates (μίσμα⁸, μαρός⁹)

⁶ The metaphorical use of οἰκοδομέω to mean ‘morally transform’ is rare in the LXX. However, in LXX Isa 54:13-14 we read: “All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the prosperity of your children. In righteousness you shall be established (οἰκοδομέω).”

⁷ 1 Macc 4:43; Wis 14:26

⁸ Lev 7:1; Jdt 9:2, 9:4, 13:16; 1 Mac 13:50; Jer 39:34; Eze 33:31

⁹ 2 Mac 4:19; 5:16; 7:34; 9:13; 15:32; 4 Mac 4:26; 9:15; 9:17; 9:32; 10:10; Sus 1:56

consistently refer to ‘abominations’ and ‘defilements’ – whether people or objects – which are, by definition, cut-off from the life of God’s people. The adjectival form *μιαρός* is particularly common in 2 Macc and 4 Macc where, with the exception of 2 Macc 4:19 (in which the reference is to the apostate Jason), it appears as the default description of Gentile rulers (2 Mac 5:16; 7:34; 9:13; 15:32; 4 Mac 4:26; 9:15; 9:17; 9:32; 10:10). The fact that the *Testaments* were probably composed around the Maccabean period may support this reading of *μιασμός* in *T. Benj.* 8.1-3 since it is precisely in the Maccabean writings that the term most frequently occurs, almost always in relation to wicked Gentiles.

1.3. Testament of Benjamin 5.1-5

A similar theme appears just three paragraphs earlier in *T. Benj.* where the writer insists that the life of a good person is able to turn an evil person towards the good:

If your mind is set toward good, even evil men will be at peace with you; the dissolute will respect you and will turn back to the good. The greedy will not only abstain from their passion but will give to the oppressed the things which they covetously hold. If you continue to do good, even the unclean spirits will flee from you and wild animals will fear you. For where someone has within himself respect for good works and has light (*φῶς*) in the understanding, darkness will slink away from that person. For if anyone wantonly attacks a pious man, he repents, since the pious man shows mercy to the one who abused him, and maintains silence. And if anyone betrays a righteous man, the righteous man prays. Even though for a brief time he may be humbled, later he will appear far more illustrious, as happened with Joseph, my brother.

Again, we note the reference to ‘light’ (*φῶς*) in connection with Torah-obedience and its power to enlighten those who exist in darkness. While the clause “darkness will slink away from that person” *τὸ σκότος ἀποδιδράσκει αὐτοῦ* may refer to the dispelling of darkness within the good man himself, in light of the logical connection between it and the examples which follow it is best to take *αὐτός* as a reference to the evil men of the opening lines and the two evil individuals (*τις*) about to be introduced. Thus, the good man, because of the light of his good works, is able to enlighten the ‘attacker’ and the ‘betrayer’. In line 4 the enlightenment of the evil man expresses itself in repentance (*μετανοέω*).

Is the returning ‘sinner’ to be thought of as a converted Gentile or merely as a repentant Jew? The reference may in fact include both. *T. Benj.* regularly refers to the Joseph story from Genesis 37, and even takes Joseph

as the paradigm of the good man. Indeed, in 3.1 we read: “pattern your life after the good and pious man Joseph.” This forms the basis of the ensuing instructions about the pursuit of the ‘good’. The second and third chapters of *T. Benj.* offer brief descriptions of the hardships endured by Joseph in Egypt which he suffered at the hands of the Ishmaelites (*T. Benj.* 2) and Joseph’s own brothers (*T. Benj.* 3). Moreover, the preceding ‘testament’, *T. Jos.* is virtually a litany of the evils committed against Joseph, almost all of which were perpetrated by pagans (*T. Jos.* 2-9, 12-14, 20). Only chapter one refers to the evils committed by Joseph’s brothers. The point of all this is to note that within the rhetorical flow of the *Testaments* (in particular, the final two) a reference to responding to ‘evil’ with ‘good’, such as that enjoined in *T. Benj.* 5 and 8, must include (and perhaps especially so) the evils perpetrated against the godly by Gentiles. Thus, the *Testament of Benjamin*, like the *Testament of Levi*, teaches that Torah-obedience should contain a missionary dimension, moving the impious to repentance, the ignorant to enlightenment.

1.4. Letter of Aristeas 227

Leaving the *Testaments*, we turn to the *Letter of Aristeas* (second century B.C.¹⁰) where we find again the Jewish belief that good works may convert another to the right path. In response to the king’s fifth question (concerning ‘generosity’ / φιλότιμος), the fifth Jewish sage replies:

“It is a man’s duty,” he replied, “(to be generous) toward those who are amicably disposed to us. That is the general opinion. My belief is that we must (also) show liberal charity to our opponents (τοὺς ἀντιδοξοῦντας) so that in this manner we may convert them to what is proper and fitting to them. You must pray God that these things be brought to pass, for he rules the minds of all.”

Here the sage declares his duty (δεῖ) to express a keen generosity toward those of a contrary opinion. The ἀντίδοξος mentioned here may refer to any opinion held by a person with whom one is arguing. However, the context suggests something more. The sages (from Palestine) are now in a Gentile land being questioned by a Gentile king about the import of the Jewish law. The king is testing the Jewish teachers to find out the worth of the Laws by which they abide. In this context, showing lavish generosity toward one’s ‘opponents’ most likely refers to a kindness which ought to

¹⁰ The majority of scholars place the composition of the document in the second half of the second century BCE. See the discussion in J. J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 97-100.

be shown to those of another religious opinion, i.e., to non-Jews. That the term ἀντίδοξος may in fact refer to a ‘different sect’¹¹ supports such a reading.

The purpose (ἵνα) of this course of action, according to the sage, is to transfer (μετάγω) dissenters from their previously held position to one that is ‘profitable’ (συμφέρω) to them.¹² That the ‘benefit’ referred to here is that resulting from the adoption of Jewish wisdom is suggested by the fact that the theme of the king’s advantage (συμφέρω) through engaging with the wisdom of the Torah has been a recurring theme up to this point (25, 44, 45, 125, 199, 227). Indeed, this provided a key motivation for the Jewish council’s decision to go ahead in the first place with the translation of the Scripture’s into Greek. In 44-45 the council wrote to king Ptolemy II:

Everything which is to your advantage (συμφέρω), even if it is unnatural, we will carry out; this is a sign of friendship and love ... The whole multitude made supplication that it should come to pass for you entirely as you desire, and that God the ruler of all should preserve your kingdom in peace and glory, and that the translation of the sacred Law should come to pass for your advantage (γένηταί σοι συμφερόντως).

The mention here of supplication for the king’s advantage (through the Torah) also makes for a striking parallel with the reference to prayer in the present passage, a point pursued below. Although Feldman perhaps overstates the case when he interprets our text as evidence that “Jews take the initiative in evangelizing,”¹³ *Let. Aris.* 227 does provide evidence of the Jewish belief that good conduct is able to mediate the blessings (σύμφορος) of the Torah to those without the Torah.¹⁴

The significance of this text does not lie in whether an individual Jewish sage held the above belief: for the purposes of this study it is irrelevant whether *Let. Aris.* contains any historically solid data about the original

¹¹ LSJ 155. Lucian *Hermotimus, or Sects* 17; Aristaenetus *Epistolographi* 1.10.

¹² While the plural pronoun (ἑαυτοῖς) may mean ‘ourselves’ – i.e., that which is advantageous to Jews – the strongly altruistic tenor of all the replies from these Jewish sages (187-294) demands that it be read as ‘themselves’.

¹³ Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 294.

¹⁴ A similar thought is present in 2 Tim 2:25 wherein the writer exhorts ‘Timothy’ to deal gently with the religious dissenter in order that God might grant repentance to him: ἐν πραύτητι παιδεύοντα τοὺς ἀντιδιατιθεμένους, μήποτε δώη αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς μετάνοιαν εἰς ἐπίγνωσιν ἀληθείας.

translators. The real importance of the passage lies in the function of the epistle itself within the Alexandrian Jewish community.¹⁵

Ever since V. Tcherikover's influential essay¹⁶ scholars have been cautious about too quickly ascribing to the Greek Jewish literature of this period an apologetic purpose,¹⁷ as if it were written to convince a Gentile audience of the truthfulness of Judaism.¹⁸ McKnight and Goodman, moreover, enthusiastically endorse Tcherikover's negative conclusions. Louis H. Feldman, however, has provided a robust, point-by-point critique of the latter, demonstrating the plausibility of the contention that many upper-class Gentile men and women from our period will have had some knowledge of the Jewish literature in Greek and, further, that such literature must have played some part in drawing Gentiles to Jewish faith.¹⁹

For our purposes, however, the distinction between an 'insider-purpose' and an 'outsider-purpose' is, as Donaldson²⁰ and Carleton Paget²¹ point out, not so clear cut, especially since, even if we assume a Jewish audience for a work such as *Let. Aris.*, the document clearly functions as an aid for living within a Gentile society. The fact that one third of the book (187-294; the entire central section) is devoted to the pagan king's numerous philosophical questions, and the Jewish teachers' proficient replies, strongly suggests that Jewish readers of this document were to find here ample material for responding to the queries of their own Gentile

¹⁵ On the probable Alexandrian provenance of the epistle see the article by R. J. H. Shutt in *OTP* vol 2, 7-11. On the political and philosophical agendas of *Let. Aris.* see the discussion in J. J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 97-103, 191-95. Collins argues that the writer has twin aims: to reassure Gentiles of the loyalty of the Jews toward the Ptolemaic house and to confirm the Jewish readership in such loyalty. Hence, the agenda of integration with non-Jewish neighbours is evident throughout the work. The universalism of *Let. Aris.* is probably related to this, for by it the author endorses openness toward that which is good in the Gentile world.

¹⁶ Tcherikover, V. "Jewish Apologetic Literature Reconsidered." *Eos* 48 (1956): 169-93.

¹⁷ In an earlier period, Derwacter, *Preparing the Way*, 48-53, argued for a decidedly apologetic purpose for some of this literature.

¹⁸ McKnight, *Light*, 57-62, and Goodman, *Mission*, 65-67, 78-81, enthusiastically endorse Tcherikover's negative conclusion.

¹⁹ Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 305-322.

²⁰ Donaldson, *Paul and the Gentiles*, 61, 321-22.

²¹ Carleton Paget, "Jewish Proselytism," 83-86.

‘interrogators’.²² The judgement of J. J. Collins in relation to the ‘apologetic literature’ is apposite:

When we realize that what was at stake [in the Diaspora] was the plausibility of Jewish tradition in a new environment and the dissonance experienced by the Hellenized Jew, it is almost inevitable that the ‘apologetic’ would be directed simultaneously to those within and to those outside. If Gentiles could be persuaded to embrace Judaism, clearly the Jews need not feel social pressure to abandon it. The outward movement of the propaganda simultaneously has the effect of bolstering the faith of the community. On the other hand, the concentration on those aspects of Judaism which were most acceptable in the Hellenistic world could also facilitate propaganda and proselytism, since it presented Judaism in terms which a Greek could understand and appreciate.²³

It is in just such an historical context that *Let. Aris.* 227 takes on wider significance, for in this text the Jewish reader is informed of the power of Torah-obedience (combined with prayer) to mediate the benefits of the Torah to those with contrary beliefs. The missionary import of the text, thus, becomes clear.

1.5. *On the Life of Joseph* 86-87

A passage in Philo refers to the biblical Joseph who, having been given charge of the jail in which he was imprisoned, began to promote his ‘philosophy’ among his fellow inmates:

they [the prisoners] were rebuked by his wise words and doctrines of philosophy, while the conduct of their teacher effected more than any words. For by setting before them his life of temperance and every virtue, like an original picture of skilled workmanship, he converted even those who seemed to be quite incurable, who as the long-standing distempers of their soul abated reproached themselves for their past and repented.

Since the text concerns the role of Joseph as a teacher of his Gentile associates it will be dealt with in more detail later in the discussion (see below, ‘Mission as Verbal Apologetic’). For the present purpose it is enough simply to note that Philo believed Joseph’s conduct had the power to convert those around him. Whether his retelling of the biblical narrative

²² In relation to apologetic literature, Carleton Paget, “Jewish Proselytism,” 83, rightly remarks: “Why should we in any case have an ‘either/or’ approach to this literature? And even if we believe that most of it is directed to an internal audience, it may be providing Jewish readers with fodder for their conversations with curious or sceptical pagans.”

²³ J. J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 15-16.

(Gen. 39:20-23) belonged already to a pious tradition or was merely a literary invention employed for his own purposes cannot be ascertained. However, the importance of Joseph's piety amidst pagans throughout *T. Jos* and in *T. Benj.* 3.1-2 and the connected exhortation to allow one's good life to lead others to repentance (*T. Benj.* 5 and 8), suggests that Philo's rendition represents a variation upon a shared tradition about the godly influence Joseph was able to effect among the Gentiles of Egypt. The point, of course, is that by including this account, Philo endorses the view that Torah-obedience (or ethical apologetic) may win the ungodly Gentile to the right path. He thereby exhorts his readership to imitate Joseph's example.

1.6. *Jewish Antiquities* 20.75-76

That the belief evidenced in the above Jewish texts was not merely a pious wish is confirmed by one historical example of the conversion of a pagan through the godly conduct of a Jewish believer. Josephus writes of the conversion of Izates' brother, Monobazus, in the following words:

Izates' brother Monobazus and his kinsmen, seeing that the king because of his pious worship of God had won the admiration of all men, became eager to abandon their ancestral religion and to adopt the practices of the Jews (*Ant.* 20.75-76).

A primary goal of much of the ethics of antiquity – Greek, Jewish and Christian – was to win the praise or approval of one's fellow citizens.²⁴ Thus, Monobazus' actions must not be read in an anachronistically negative light – as if he saw in Judaism merely a short-cut to being well-

²⁴ Epictetus speaks of the truly moral person winning the praise of others: "the man who knows how to observe such matters, if he sees that you have exhibited good form in this affair, will praise you [ἐπαινέω] and rejoice with you" (Epictetus *Discourses* 2.5.23 [Trans. Oldfather, *LCL*]). In Josephus, Samuel the prophet is said to have pursued a 'reputation' of gentleness and kindness: θηρωμένους γὰρ δόξαν ἐπεικειίας καὶ χρηστότητος (*Ant.* 6.144). In *The Migration of Abraham* 95 Philo announces the one ethical ambition of the "all-virtuous Leah" (τῆς παναρέτου Λείας) from Gen 30:13. She endeavoured to be thought of by others as gentle: στοχάζεται γὰρ ὑπολήψεως ἐπεικοῦ. He then comments (96), "It is characteristic of a perfect soul to aspire to be and to be thought to be, and to take pains not only to have a good reputation in the men's quarters, but to receive the praises [ἐπαινέω] of the women's as well" (Trans. Colson and Whitaker, *LCL*). To this we could add New Testament examples: Jesus is said to have grown in 'favour' with both God and man (Luke 2:52 – χάριτι παρὰ θεῶ καὶ ἀνθρώποις); the overseers of 1 Tim 3:7 were to have a good reputation with outsiders (μαρτυρίαν καλὴν ἔχειν ἀπὸ τῶν ἕξωθεν).

liked – for what Josephus describes is Monobazus’ estimation of Jewish piety as the means of attaining the high ideal of a good reputation. Izates embodied Torah-obedience, here described as “pious worship of God” (πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσέβειαν)²⁵ and the result was the conversion of his brother and several other ‘relatives’. The Jewish ideal of the missionary orientation of piety (εὐσέβεια) here finds striking expression in the life of the converted king of Adiabene. By including this explanation of the conversion – or perhaps inventing it – Josephus betrays his endorsement of the ideal.

2. Mission-commitment as prayer

In 1 Kings 8:41-43 Solomon, in his dedication of the temple, offers a prayer with a distinct missionary flavour:

Likewise when a foreigner, who is not of your people Israel, comes from a distant land because of your name – for they shall hear of your great name, your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm – when a foreigner comes and prays toward this house, then hear in heaven your dwelling place, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and so that they may know that your name has been invoked on this house that I have built.

The words are surprisingly blatant and hardly open to misinterpretation: the king supplicates God to hear the individual requests of occasional Gentile visitors *so that* the entire world may also come into the relationship with Yahweh which Israel enjoys.

Several texts of the second temple period evidence a similar missionary orientation to prayer.

2.1. *Jewish Antiquities* 8.115-117

In recounting Solomon’s great temple prayer Josephus offers his own rendition:

¹¹⁵ And if ever the people sin and then because of their sin are smitten by some evil from Thee, by unfruitfulness of the soil or a destructive pestilence or any such affliction with which Thou visitest those who transgress any of the sacred laws, and if they all gather to take refuge in the temple, entreating Thee and praying to be saved,

²⁵ The pious conduct of Izates and his mother is one of the central themes of Josephus’ entire account of the royal house of Adiabene.

then do Thou hearken to them as though Thou wert within, and pity them and deliver them from their misfortunes.¹¹⁶ And this help I ask of Thee not alone for the Hebrews who may fall into error, but also if any come even from the ends of the earth or from wherever it may be and turn to Thee, imploring to receive some kindness, do Thou hearken and give it them.¹¹⁷ For so would all men know that Thou Thyself didst desire that this house should be built for Thee in our land, and also that we are not inhumane by nature nor unfriendly to those who are not of our country, but wish that all men equally should receive aid from Thee and enjoy Thy blessings (trans. L. Feldman *LCL*).

Josephus has altered several elements of the biblical narrative. In the Hebrew and Greek versions of 1 Kings 8, the section relating to Gentiles (vv.41-43) is not conceptually connected with the preceding material about Israel's covenant unfaithfulness and the provision of the temple for the nation's forgiveness (vv.33-40).²⁶ Josephus, however, makes such a connection explicit. Having spoken of the transgression and repentance of Israel and the mercy from God that follows (115), Josephus makes Solomon pray "And this help I ask of Thee not alone for the Hebrews who may fall into error, but also if any come even from the ends of the earth" (*ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπὸ περάτων τῆς οἰκουμένης τινὲς*) suggesting that the mercy shown to Israel despite its sin is open to repentant Gentiles as well. The concept of repentance is probably also implied by the reference to 'turning toward' (*προστρέπω*) God. Thus, Josephus appears to have interpreted the unspecified Gentile petitioner of the biblical text as a 'convert' who, like members of Israel, has embraced God's covenant mercy and sought his blessing.

As in the biblical text, Josephus' account has Solomon implore God to grant the Gentile his request. The result of this, however, differs slightly from the account in 1 Kings 8:43. According to Josephus, when the Gentile receives his blessing all people will come to know that the Jerusalem temple had been built by the will of God (117). This reinterpretation is probably to be explained as a rebuttal of (Greco-)Roman disregard for the Jerusalem temple: we should recall that Josephus writes in the wake of the destruction of the (second) temple. But not only will the answered prayers of the Gentile prove the temple's worth, according to the final clause, it will display the religious open-heartedness of the Jewish people. By showering his blessings on foreigners, the God of Israel will reveal his

²⁶ The Hebrew has the conjunction <g-w+ in v.41, which may mean 'likewise' but more probably means 'additionally'. The Septuagint translator apparently understood it so and rendered it simply with *καί*.

people to be those who “wish that all men equally should receive aid from Thee and enjoy Thy blessings.” Josephus is no doubt seeking to refute the suggestion that Jews of the period were misanthropic, something he will pursue at length in *Against Apion*. Hence Feldman is correct to describe *Ant.* 8.117 as “an apologetic variation on Scripture.”²⁷ Nevertheless, we cannot dismiss this variation simply because it is ‘apologetic’, as if this somehow means that it does not also reveal Josephus’ own convictions. The fact that he has placed these words into Solomon’s prayer most likely reveals the author’s own desires (θέλω) and, indeed, his own prayers to God that ‘all men’ would receive an equal share of the blessings of Yahweh.²⁸ It is this logic that led as sceptical a scholar of Jewish mission as M. Goodman to concede concerning this text that, “Josephus claimed that Solomon built the Jerusalem Temple precisely in order to persuade all men to serve God.”²⁹ At the very least *Ant.* 8.115-117 presents us with a contemporary reaffirmation of the centuries-earlier missionary ‘prayer of Solomon’ that Gentiles would enjoy the benefits of Jewish piety.

2.2. *On the Life of Moses* 1.149

A text in *Moses* 1.149 offers clear evidence of the missionary dimension of Jewish prayer. In describing the office given by God to Moses, Philo writes:

He Who presides over and takes charge of all things thought good to requite him with the kingship of a nation more populous and mightier, a nation destined to be consecrated above all others to offer prayers for ever on behalf of the human race that it may be delivered from evil and participate in what is good (Trans. Colson, *LCL*).

²⁷ See note *b* on page 634 of his translation of *Ant.* (*LCL*).

²⁸ An analogy may be found in the comment of Celsus (*Contra Celsum* 3.9) that Christians are positively disinterested in welcoming outsiders into the faith, to which Origen retorts that all Christians take measures to promote the faith as best they can. While Origen’s comments are clearly ‘apologetic’ and may not in fact represent historical reality, they still reveal his own perspective of how things ought to be. The same is probably true of Josephus’ comment in *Ant.* 8.117.

²⁹ Goodman, *Mission*, 86-87. Despite this concession, Goodman cites *Ant.* 8.117 as evidence only of an ‘apologetic mission’ on the part of Jews, that is, of an enthusiasm for Gentile recognition of the power of the Jewish God.

It is clear that Philo is reflecting on LXX Exodus 19:5-6.³⁰ Thus, whereas other Jewish texts interpreted the Exodus passage in terms of the mediation of God's blessing through Israel's 'Torah-obedience', Philo understood the passage in the liturgically specific sense of Israel's commission to offer priestly prayers to God on behalf of the entire human race (ὕπερ τοῦ γένους τῶν ἀνθρώπων). Though couched in the categories of Philo's hellenistic philosophical outlook, the description of the content of these prayers leaves us in no doubt as to the missionary orientation of this national commission. 'Escaping evil' and 'sharing in good' can mean nothing other than leaving paganism and adopting the worship of the one true God. Regardless of whether this thought is implied in the biblical text upon which Philo bases these comments, it seems reasonable to assume that Philo reflects here a community consciousness on the part of Jews of first century Alexandria (the largest Jewish community outside Palestine)³¹ of their divinely appointed role to pray for the deliverance of the Gentile world.

2.3. *Special Laws 1.97*

In *Spec. Laws* 1.84-97 Philo offers his allegorical interpretation of the regulations concerning the dress of the high priest. The intricate design of the vesture, he argues, is a symbol of the structure of the universe, from the highest heavens to the lowest regions of the world. From this Philo draws out various universalistic implications, the third and last of which concerns the cosmic scope of the high priest's prayers:

There is also a third truth symbolized by the holy vesture which must not be passed over in silence. Among the other nations the priests are accustomed to offer prayers and sacrifices for their kinsmen and friends and fellow-countrymen only, but the high priest of the Jews makes prayers and gives thanks not only on behalf of the whole human race but also for the parts of nature, earth, water, air, fire. For he holds the world (ὁ κόσμος) to be, as in very truth it is, his country, and in its behalf he is wont to propitiate the Ruler with supplication and intercession (ὕπερ ἧς ἰκεσίαις καὶ λιταῖς εἴωθεν ἐξευμενίζεσθαι τὸν ἡγεμόνα), beseeching (ποτνιώμενος) Him to make His creature a partaker of His own kindly and merciful nature (Trans. Colson, *LCL*).

³⁰ 1) That Moses is presented with a 'kingship' recalls the Septuagint's βασιλείος; 2) the verb ἱεράομαι means 'to be made a priest' and obviously points to ἱεράτευμα ('priesthood') in the Scriptural text; 3) the reference to Israel's selection 'out of all other nations' is clearly reminiscent of the phrase λαὸς περιούσιος ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔθνῶν (LXX Exodus 19:5).

³¹ For a concise history of the Alexandrian Jews and their religious life see Binder, *Into the Temple Courts*, 246-54.

Philo draws an immediate contrast between the narrow ministry of pagan priests and the universal concern of the Jewish high priest. The former offer prayers and sacrifices only for their own kind, whereas the latter offers prayers and thanksgivings for both the entire human race and the various parts of nature. Interestingly, in the latter statement Philo replaces the reference to ‘giving sacrifices’ with ‘giving thanks’. This is probably intentional and is intended to avoid the implication that Gentiles participate directly in the sacrificial system of the Jewish covenant. Furthermore, because *prayers* on behalf of the specific ‘parts of nature’ (earth, water, air, fire) would be theologically spurious even for Philo, he speaks of *thanksgivings*, a more appropriate type of prayer said on behalf of the elements.

The change to ὁ κόσμος in the following line broadens the reference and includes both nature and humankind. The high priest regards this ‘universe’ as his own country and so by prayers and supplications – but, again, not by sacrifices³² – he seeks to “propitiate the Ruler” (ἐξευμενίζεσθαι τὸν ἡγεμόνα). This statement is significant, for in *Spec. Laws* ‘propitiating God’ is the exclusive activity of repentant Jews seeking God’s favour.³³ The priest, therefore, through his prayers endeavours to bring some kind of reconciliation between the universe (including the Gentile nations) and its Lord. To this end, in fact, he ‘cries aloud,’ ποτνιαόμαι, an extraordinarily emotive term³⁴ and one which serves to emphasize the priest’s (or rather, Philo’s) depth of concern for the ‘salvation’ of the cosmos.

The reconciliation itself is described in the closing line: “a partaker of His own kindly and merciful nature” (τῆς ἐπιεικοῦς καὶ ἴλεω φύσεως

³² The omission of the reference to ‘sacrifice’ appears deliberate since the next time the phrase appears (*Spec. Laws* 2.17), in relation to Jews this time, the word is mentioned: εὐχαῖς καὶ θυσίαις ἐξευμενίζεσθαι τὸν θεόν.

³³ So in *Spec. Laws* 2.17 he warns vindictive brethren to “propitiate God with prayers and sacrifices (εὐχαῖς καὶ θυσίαις ἐξευμενίζεσθαι τὸν θεόν) to win from Him ...the healing treatment of their spiritual distempers.” In 2.196 he states that on Jewish holy days the people, “seek earnestly to propitiate God (τὸν θεόν ἐξευμενίζεσθαι) and ask for remission of their sins (παραίτησιν ἁμαρτημάτων αἰτούμενοι) ...and entertain bright hopes looking not to their own merits but to the gracious nature of Him Who sets pardon before chastisement.” Finally, in 2.209 Philo speaks of those who in fear of experiencing the misfortunes of the past “beseech Him and propitiate Him with supplications (λιπαροῦσι καὶ ἰκεσίαις ἐξευμενίζονται).”

³⁴ Ποτνιαόμαι derives from “to cry ὦ πότνια” (i.e., “Oh master”) and hence means to ‘implore loudly’ (*LSJ* 1455).

αὐτοῦ μεταδίδοναι).³⁵ What Philo means by this statement is not clear. It could refer to the moral transformation of the world, that is, to the world's share in the divine qualities of kindness and mercy. Hence the reconciliation of the world would be thought of primarily in terms of the attainment of virtue, a view quite at home in the writings of Philo. On the other hand, the expression could refer to the objective salvation of the world, that is, to its receipt of God's gifts of kindness and mercy. This interpretation is preferred on the grounds that it is more consonant with the concept of 'appeasing/propitiating' (ἐξευμενίζομαι) which is associated with obtaining God's favour/mercy. Thus, Philo casts the high priest as a cosmic mediator, pleading the Creator to grant³⁶ mercy to the world. Two further texts in *Spec. Laws* confirm this interpretation.³⁷

³⁵ The participle ποτινιώμενος qualifies the infinitive ἐξευμενίζεσθαι and so conveys the means by which the high priest seeks to propitiate God on behalf of the universe. Thus, the content of the cry (τῆς ἐπιεικοῦς καὶ ἴλεω φύσεως αὐτοῦ μεταδίδοναι) reveals just how Philo conceives of the world's reconciliation with its Maker.

³⁶ The translation "make His creature a partaker of" is slightly misleading since μεταδίδωμι does not so much mean 'to make one a partaker of' but simply to *share with* or *give to* another. This is seen not only in the parallel passage (*Spec. Laws* 2.15 – μεταδῶ τῆς ἴλεω δυνάμεως αὐτῷ) but elsewhere in *Spec. Laws* as well: 1.126; 1.294; 2.71; 2.107; 2.141; 3.196; 4.74.

³⁷ In *Spec. Laws* 2.15 Philo admonishes those (Jews) who have broken vows: "Let him abstain, then, from wrongful conduct and supplicate God, that He may grant him a share of what His gracious power can give and pardon him for what he has sworn so unadvisedly" (Trans. Colson, *LCL*; ἀπεχόμενος οὖν τοῦ ἀδικοπραγεῖν ποτινιάσθω τὸν θεόν, ἵνα μεταδῶ τῆς ἴλεω δυνάμεως αὐτῷ συγγνοῦς ἐφ' οἷς ἀβουλία χρησάμενος ὄμοσε.) The reference to ποτινιάσθω τὸν θεόν parallels τὸν ἡγεμόνα ποτινιώμενος in *Spec. Laws* 1.97; likewise μεταδῶ τῆς ἴλεω δυνάμεως αὐτῷ strongly resembles the grammar and vocabulary of τῆς ἐπιεικοῦς καὶ ἴλεω φύσεως αὐτοῦ μεταδίδοναι τῷ γενομένῳ. Moreover, when Philo restates this advise two paragraphs later (2.17) he says, "they should propitiate God with prayers and sacrifices (εὐχαῖς καὶ θυσίαις ἐξευμενίζεσθαι τὸν θεόν)." Again, in *Spec. Laws* 2.196 Philo describes the activities of the Jews on their holy days: "[They] seek earnestly to propitiate God and ask for remission of their sins, voluntary and involuntary, and entertain bright hopes looking not to their own merits but to the gracious nature of Him Who sets pardon before chastisement" (ἀγόντων ἢ δεητικωτάτας εὐχάς, αἷς σπουδάζουσι τὸν θεόν ἐξευμενίζεσθαι παραίτησιν ἀμαρτημάτων ἐκουσίων τε καὶ ἀκουσίων αἰτούμενοι καὶ χρηστὰ ἐλπίζοντες, οὐ δι' εαυτοῦς ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν ἴλεω φύσιν τοῦ συγγνώμην πρὸ κολάσεως ὀρίζοντος). The references to τὸν θεόν ἐξευμενίζεσθαι and διὰ τὴν ἴλεω φύσιν recall the statements of *Spec. Laws* 1.97. The fact that both 2.15 and 2.97 employ this apparently technical language in direct connection with God's pardon of repentant Jews suggests that Philo has a similar meaning in mind in *Spec. Laws* 1.97.

To state the obvious, the significance of this text lies not in what it can tell us about the realities of the high priest's role but in what it conveys of Philo's own beliefs. Although it is possible that Solomon's great intercession in 1 Kings 8:41-43 provides the rationale for *Spec. Laws* 1.97, the absence of linguistic similarities between the texts suggests that Philo did not have the biblical narrative in mind. The passage is therefore to be explained in terms of the author's personal conviction, evidenced in *Moses* 1.149, that the Jewish people had been set apart by God in order to mediate the divine blessings – through prayer – to the entire world.

2.4. Letter of Aristeas 227

We have already quoted *Let. Aris.* 227 in connection with the belief that good works may 'convert' the religious dissenter. In the same text, however, is found the belief that such a conversion ought to be the subject of one's prayer to God.

[W]e must show liberal charity to our opponents so that in this manner we may convert them to what is proper and fitting to them. You must pray God that these things be brought to pass, for he rules the minds of all (Δεῖ δὲ τὸν θεὸν λιτανεύειν, ἵνα ταῦτ' ἐπιτελήται: τὰς γὰρ ἀπάντων διανοίας κρατεῖ).

It was already noted that the recurring theme of the king's advantage (συμφέρω) through the learning of the Torah appears to lie behind this statement, thus, the missionary import of the passage is clear. Furthermore, we suggested that the real significance of the text lies not in the historical veracity of the narrative but in the didactic/apologetic function of the epistle within the Jewish community, for which it provided ample material for responding to the questions and criticisms of their own Gentile 'dissenters'. Here, then, in the insistence that conversion is effected only through prayer, further instruction is offered to the readers about the missionary orientation of this aspect of Jewish piety.

A striking parallel with the present passage is found in 44-45, where the Jerusalem council's decision to proceed with king Ptolemy's (II) request for a Greek translation of the Scriptures is ratified by corporate prayer. We read: "The whole multitude made supplication (καὶ ἤψατο πᾶν τὸ πλῆθος) that ... the translation of the sacred Law should come to pass for your advantage (γένηταί σοι συμφερόντως)." Here, then, at the beginning of *Let. Aris.*, is a reminder to the (Jewish) readers that the Gentiles' advantage (through acquaintance with Torah-wisdom) should be the subject of one's prayers, a point reiterated in 227.

3. Mission-commitment as verbal apologetic

We noted above various examples of explicit missionizing on the part of some Jews in the second temple period. In those cases, some form of structured ‘teaching’ or ‘proclamation’ was clearly involved. We turn now to offer evidence that some Jews advocated less structured types of persuasion oriented toward the promotion of Judaism and the winning of Gentiles to the worship of God. Such persuasion may be called ‘verbal apologetic’.

3.1. *On the Life of Joseph 85-87*

We return to the Philonic passage treated above in relation to ethical apologetic. Here the author makes a curious reference to the missionary activity of the biblical Joseph who successfully promoted his ‘philosophy’ among his fellow inmates:

⁸⁵ He [the jailer] resigned to Joseph the actual office, which thus became the source of no small benefit to those who were in confinement. ⁸⁶ Thus even the place, as they felt, could not rightly be called a prison, but a house of correction. For instead of the tortures and punishments which they used to endure night and day under the lash or in manacles or in every possible affliction, they were rebuked by his wise words and doctrines of philosophy, while the conduct of their teacher effected more than any words. ⁸⁷ For by setting before them his life of temperance and every virtue, like an original picture of skilled workmanship, he converted even those who seemed to be quite incurable, who as the long-standing distempers of their soul abated reproached themselves for their past and repented (Trans. Colson, *LCL*).

It was noted previously that Philo’s rendition of the biblical account of Joseph’s imprisonment (Gen. 39:20-23) arose, perhaps, from a wider Jewish tradition concerning the patriarch’s godly effect on the pagans of Egypt (*T. Jos.*; *T. Benj.* 3.1-2; 5.1-4; 8.1-3). According to Philo, that effect, described here as μετανοέω, came principally through his conduct, a point also affirmed in *T. Jos.* and *T. Benj.* Nevertheless, his narrative is clear in stating that Joseph also engaged in proclamation or education as a Jewish philosopher. He ‘admonished’ (νουθετέω) with words (λόγοι) and ‘with philosophical doctrines’ (δόγμασι τοῖς φιλοσοφίας), assuming the role of the ‘teacher’ (διδάσκαλος). Whether this description of Joseph’s ‘mission’ work also belongs to a shared tradition is difficult to assess, since the only references in *T. Jos.* to Joseph’s declarations while in prison involve his singing God’s praises: “I gave thanks to the Lord and sang praise in the house of darkness ... and I rejoiced with cheerful voice, glorifying my God

(*T. Jos.* 8.5)³⁸ More likely is the suggestion that Philo has here recast the tradition within the language of his own vocation as one who in the great pagan Egyptian city of Alexandria sought to admonish the Gentiles by his own “wise words and doctrines of philosophy,” providing them with a source of no small benefit (οὐκ ὀλίγα συνέβαινε τοὺς ἀπαχθέντας ὠφελεῖσθαι). We recall that the motif of ‘benefiting’ the masses appeared in connection with the contrast between the mystics and Jewish teachers in *Spec. Laws* 1.320-323.

Like *Spec. Laws* 1.320-323, *Joseph* 85-87 presents us with evidence of Philo’s approval of, and probable engagement in, the winning of pagans to Judaism through verbal apologetic. As with the former passage, Philo’s point here is especially, if not exclusively, descriptive of the role of Alexandrian Jewish διδάσκαλοι rather than the Jewish community more widely, since his choice of language – νουθετέω, διδάσκω, δόγμα, φιλοσοφία – is probably intended to connote formal modes of instruction.

3.2. Jewish Antiquities 20.34-35

The royal women of Charax Spasini in *Ant.* 20.34-35 provide an example of Jewish verbal apologetic that cannot be described as that of a Jewish teacher.

Now during the time when Izates resided at Charax Spasini, a certain Jewish merchant named Ananias visited the king’s wives and taught them to worship God after the manner of the Jewish tradition. It was through their agency that he was brought to the notice of Izates, whom he similarly won over with the co-operation of the women (trans. L. H. Feldman *LCL*).

The missionizing work of Ananias has already been discussed at length. What is significant here is that the newly converted royal women appear immediately to have introduced their teacher to prince Izates with the explicit intention that the latter might (as they had) learn how to worship God after the tradition of the Jews. The ‘taught’ have become imitators of their missionary instructor. We might, then, have expected to read simply that Ananias ‘persuaded/won-over’ (ἀναπείθω) Izates to the worship of God. But Josephus’ language is clear: “whom he similarly won over with the co-operation of the women” (κάκεινον ὁμοίως συνανέπεισεν).

³⁸ *T. Jos.* 8.5 ὕμνον Κύριον ὃν ἐν οἴκῳ σκότους, καὶ ἐν ἰλαρᾷ φωνῇ χαίρων ἐδόξαζον τὸν Θεόν μου

The prefix συν- attached to ἀναπέιθω makes plain that the women helped Ananias to bring Izates to the worship of God, engaging in their own form of persuasion.³⁹ Whether we are to think of the women offering instruction in the Torah – in the manner of Ananias, the διδάσκαλος – is difficult to say. However, they perhaps at least provided Izates with additional cultural, ethical or personal reasons for adopting the faith they had recently embraced. This co-operative persuasion was clearly effective since Josephus tells us that Izates was won-over just as the women previously had been (ὁμοίως).

3.3. 2 Maccabees 9:13-17

One passage provides evidence that the writer of 2 Maccabees believed that proclamation of God's greatness amongst Gentiles was an act of godliness. Having been afflicted by God with a dreadful disease Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 B.C.) is made by the writer to declare a vow to God:

Then the abominable fellow made a vow to the Lord, who would no longer have mercy on him, stating ¹⁴ that the holy city, which he was hurrying to level to the ground and to make a cemetery, he was now declaring to be free; ¹⁵ and the Jews, whom he had not considered worth burying but had planned to throw out with their children for the wild animals and for the birds to eat, he would make, all of them, equal to citizens of Athens; ¹⁶ and the holy sanctuary, which he had formerly plundered, he would adorn with the finest offerings; and all the holy vessels he would give back, many times over; and the expenses incurred for the sacrifices he would provide from his own revenues; ¹⁷ and in addition to all this he also would become a Jew and would visit every inhabited place to proclaim the power of God (Ἰουδαῖον ἔσσεσθαι καὶ πάντα τόπον οἰκητὸν ἐπελεύσεσθαι καταγγέλλοντα τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ κράτος).

Although historically dubious, the passage is interesting for the insight it provides into the beliefs of the writer. The vow, of course, represents something of a Jewish wish-list during the time of the Seleucid tyrant: the free status of the city of Jerusalem, equal rights for Jewish citizens, return of the plundered temple treasure, and so on.⁴⁰ It is in this context that the final and climactic items of the vow take on their significance. The pagan king pledges not only to become a Jew but, further, to proclaim that faith

³⁹ It is just possible the prefix refers to Ananias' earlier persuasion of the women ("Ananias persuaded Izates together with the women."). However, the expression καὶ διὰ αὐτῶν εἰς γνῶσιν ἀφικόμενος τῷ Ἰζάτῃ in the preceding clause indicates Josephus' wish to emphasize the involvement of the women. The συν-, then, is most naturally read as a continuation of this thought.

⁴⁰ On the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the situation of the Jews under him, see Downey, G. *A History of Antioch in Syria From Seleucus to the Arab Conquests*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961, 95-111.

throughout the world.⁴¹ It is true that God rejects the vow (2 Macc 9:18) but this only heightens the writer's point: the rhetorical effect of the passage is to impress upon the readers that such was the weight of God's judgement upon Antiochus IV Epiphanes that even such a lavish pledge of piety as converting to Judaism and proclaiming God's power was insufficient to change God's mind. Thus, as Feldman rightly notes, "the author here betrays his positive and even triumphalist attitude toward conversion to Judaism."⁴² Whether the text points to a situation in which some Jews at the time did engage in proclamation among the Gentiles⁴³ is difficult to say. The point though is that such an act would have been considered most pious. Thus, verbal apologetic directed at pagans is plainly endorsed.

3.4. Horace, *Satires* 1.4.138-143

Another text that may refer to Jewish enthusiasm in persuading Gentiles into their community is found in Horace, *Sat.* 1.4.138-143. There, in Horace's personal apology for his own satirical literary style, he offers the conclusion that if the reader will not concede him the right to his literary pursuits he will force them to concede:

[A]nd if you make no allowance for it [*cui si concedere nolis*], then would a big band of poets come to my aid – for we are the big majority – and we, like the Jews, will compel you to make one of our throng [*ac veluti te Iudaei cogemus in hanc concedere turbam*] (trans. H. R. Fairclough, *LCL*).

While this text has traditionally been accepted as referring to some form of proselytism, J. Nolland⁴⁴ has offered a significant reinterpretation. He begins by noting that *cogere* is a military term and out of place as a description of proselytism.⁴⁵ He further insists that the verb *concedere* in lines 140 and 143 must have the same meaning. That meaning, he suggests, is not 'to pass (into a new state or condition)', or 'to go over, transfer (to a policy, party etc.)' but simply 'to yield' or 'to indulge'

⁴¹ 2 Macc 3:34-39 reports also how Heliodorus, one of the pagan king's ministers, was beaten by angels and was ordered by them to report to all the power of the Jewish God. Heliodorus promptly obeys (vv.36-39).

⁴² Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 294.

⁴³ The phrase πάντα τόπον οἰκητῶν ἐπελεύσεσθαι must imply proclamation among other Gentiles throughout the world.

⁴⁴ Nolland, "Proselytism or Politics," 347-355.

⁴⁵ Nolland, "Proselytism or Politics," 347-348.

someone something.⁴⁶ He then concludes that Horace's point is that if people will not indulge his literary work he will with a great band of poets compel his readership to indulge him, just as the Jews compel people to indulge them their interests. He offers Cicero *Pro Flacco* 66 as evidence that "fear of getting on the wrong side of the Jews" in the political arena was well known in Rome and provides the best context for understanding Horace's comment.⁴⁷ Thus, the passage says nothing about mission, only about the pushiness of Jews in the civic life of Rome.

In response several things may be said. First, the military imagery is just that, 'imagery'. As a metaphor *cogere* is no more out of place in reference to Jewish proselytism than it is in reference to Horace's subject, poetry. Secondly, the proximity of the two instances of *concedere* does not demand an identical meaning. In such a highly rhetorical piece it is just as likely that Horace intends something of a pun – two slightly nuanced meanings from the same word in close proximity. Thirdly, even if Horace does mean "we, like the Jews, will force you to indulge us," I fail to see why this would mean that proselytism is not on view. If, as argued previously, the expulsion of Jews in 139 B.C. was related to proselytizing it is probable that Horace knew of the event and its cause. The fact that the same thing happened thirty years or so after Horace, in A.D. 19, suggests that the Jews in Rome continued their proselytizing activities in the capital. In this historical context, a reference to compelling people to 'yield' to their point of view is just as likely as the traditional rendering ("compel you to make one of our throng") to refer to missionary activity. In my opinion, Nolland has succeeded only in raising a question mark over what was previously considered an assured piece of evidence for Jewish mission. I present it here as further possible evidence of a Jewish inclination to persuade others to embrace their religious viewpoint.

3.5. *Mishnah 'Abot 2:14*

Several texts in 'Abot speak of the need for the faithful to engage in conversation about the Torah.⁴⁸ For instance, in 3:2c R. Hananiah b.

⁴⁶ Nolland, "Proselytism or Politics," 350-351.

⁴⁷ Nolland, "Proselytism or Politics," 353.

⁴⁸ 'Abot or 'Fathers' belongs to the fourth division and is a collection of the sayings of the sages throughout the Tannaitic period. It is distinguished from the other tractates because it does not concern a specific set of issues, such as idolatry, oaths and so on, but rather deals with various and apparently random ethical duties. W. D. Davies provides a helpful account of the history and character of 'Abot and of its relevance to the New

Teradion is quoted as saying, “If two sit together and between them do not pass teachings of Torah, lo, this is a seat of the scornful” (Ps. 1:1). Again, in 3:3c R. Simeon is said to have taught: “But three who ate at a single table and did talk about teachings of Torah while at that table are as if they ate at the table of the Omnipresent.” Obviously, such texts refer to the ‘table talk’ of fellow Jews and cannot be applied to a mission context. Nevertheless, this obligation to re-present the Torah through conversation finds an analogy just several paragraphs earlier. ’Abot 2:14 reads:

R. Eleazar says, “Be constant in learning of Torah. And know what to reply to an Epicurean (רוע מה שחשיב לאפיקורוס). And know before whom you work, for your employer can be depended upon to pay your wages for what you can do.”⁴⁹

R. Eleazar’s (Jabneh, ca. A.D. 90-110) reference to the ‘employer’ and his ‘wages’ alludes to Yahweh and the reward he will bestow upon those who devote themselves to the learning and obedience of the Torah, as the following paragraphs make clear (’Abot 2:15-16⁵⁰). The point of the reference, of course, is to intensify one’s sense of obligation in relation to the exhortation. The exhortation itself is twofold. The disciple is to be devoted to learning Torah and he is to know what to reply to an ‘Epicurean’. The thought appears to be that the latter will arise from the former. Thus, the knowledgeable reply as one of the outcomes of Torah-devotion lies at the heart of the rabbi’s exhortation.

The word ‘Epicurean’ (אפיקורוס) has been interpreted in a number of ways. Danby insists the term is a general one, referring to anyone (Jew or Gentile) that rejects Pharisaic teaching: “to Jewish ears it conveys the sense of the root *pakar*, ‘be free from restraint’, and so licentious and skeptical.”⁵¹ He therefore translates the term simply as ‘unbeliever’. The word is found in only one other place in the Mishna (*m. Sanhedrin* 10:1) where it appears at the end of a list of those that have no share in the world to

Testament studies in Davies, W. D. “Reflections on Tradition: The 'Abot Revisited.” In *Jewish and Pauline Studies*, 27-48. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

⁴⁹ The Hebrew text referred to is that in Blackmann, P. *Mishnayoth: Order Nezikin. Pointed Hebrew Text, English Translation, Introductions, Notes, Supplement, Appendix, Indexes, Addenda, Corrigenda*. Vol. 4. New York: The Judaica Press, 1963. The translation is that of Neusner, J. *Mishna: A New Translation*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.

⁵⁰ ’Abot 2:15-16 “A. R. Tarfon says ... If you have learned much Torah, they will give you a good reward. And your employer can be depended upon to pay your wages for what you do. And know what sort of reward is going to be given to the righteous in the coming time.”

⁵¹ Danby, *Mishna*, 397, n.4.

come. These are said to include the following: he that denies the resurrection (probably Sadducees), he that says the Torah is not from heaven, and the אפיקורוס. If an increasing gradation of sinfulness is intended here, ‘unbeliever’ would seem to be an appropriate rendering. W. D. Davies, however, following Goldin,⁵² argues for a stricter philosophical reference.⁵³ He notes that R. Eleazar’s teacher, R. Johanan ben Zakkai (Jabneh/Jerusalem, ca. A.D. 50-80), was well known not only for his *halakic* discussions but also for his “exploration of ethical problems which were characteristic of the Hellenistic philosophical schools.”⁵⁴ Hence, argues Davies, there is no good reason to deny אפיקורוס its more technical sense, referring to someone influenced by Epicureanism, a philosophy which, among other things, denied the fundamental biblical concept of God as Creator. The argument is plausible, but given the scarcity of clear Mishnaic engagement with Hellenistic philosophy it is difficult to accept that Davies’ understanding of the term is any more likely than that of Danby. For our purposes, however, it is clear that אפיקורוס stands for someone who is outside the community of faith and excluded from the world to come.

So then, the obligation to give a prudent reply to the outsider (‘verbal apologetic’) – a motif evident already in biblical tradition⁵⁵ – constituted for some Jewish rabbis of the first century (A.D.) one of the goals of a proper Torah education.⁵⁶ The prominence of R. Eleazar ben ‘Arak⁵⁷ in his

⁵² Goldin, J. “A Philosophical Session in a Tannaite Academy.” *Traditio* 21 (1965): 1-22.

⁵³ Davies, “‘Abot Revisited,” 38-41.

⁵⁴ Davies, “‘Abot Revisited,” 39. On the life of R. Johanan ben Zakkai see Neusner, *J. A Life of Yohanan ben Zakkai*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970.

⁵⁵ Dan 2:14 “Then Daniel responded with prudence and discretion to Arioch” (בְּאַרְיֵן דָּנִיֵּאל הִתְחַיֵּב עֲטָא וְטָעַם לְאַרְיֵן) / τότε Δανιηλ ἀπεκρίθη βουλήν καὶ γνώμην τῷ Ἀριωχ); Dan 3:16 “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to present a defense to you in this matter” (לְהִתְבַּרְתֵּךְ / ἀποκριθῆναί σοι).

⁵⁶ A delightful example of a prudent, Torah-based reply to an unbeliever appears in *Exodus Rabbah* (Shemot III, 12). Referring to Exod 4:3 a Gentile lady says to Rabbi Jose: “My God is greater than your god, for when your god appeared to Moses in the thorn bush, Moses hid his face, but when he saw my god, the snake, he fled before it.” In response R. Jose replies: “When our God appeared to Moses in the thorn bush, there was no place to which Moses could have fled. Whither could he have fled? To the heaven? To the sea? To the Land? For our God says, “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” But from your God, the snake, a man has to run only a few steps to save himself.”

⁵⁷ R. Eleazar ben ‘Arak (Jabneh, ca. 90-110 CE) was one of the best known of the Palestinian tannaim and, for a short time, head of the local Sanhedrin. As a student of the famous R. Johanan ben Zakkai (ca. 50-80 CE), “one of the chief links in the chain of Pharisaic tradition” (Davies, “‘Abot Revisited,” 39), R. Eleazar occupies a place of special importance in Tractate ‘Abot. See especially, ‘Abot 2.9 where several rabbis are

time perhaps ensures that the view expressed in 'Abot 2.14 was not an obscure one.⁵⁸ Indeed, another Pharisee from the generation of Eleazar's teacher similarly urged his disciples: "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone" (Col 4:6).⁵⁹

4. Mission-commitment as public worship

That some Greeks and Romans adopted certain Jewish customs – such as the Sabbath day and various food and fast traditions – is well known.⁶⁰ While attraction to cultural ceremonies can hardly be labelled 'mission', it does highlight the attractiveness of some elements of the Jewish religion and raises the question of whether certain aspects of Jewish liturgical life, the synagogue for instance, were instruments of mission?

Already in the Psalms we observe the occasional reference to the importance of vigorous public worship as a statement to the Gentiles of the majesty of Yahweh. Thus, for example, in Ps 96:1-3 the gathered faithful are told to conduct their public worship in full 'hearing' of the Gentiles among whom they live:

O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth. Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation (שְׁעֵהוּ) ... בְּשִׁירָיו from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples.⁶¹

asked questions by their master (R. Johanan) and each time R. Eleazar's answer is marked out as the 'preferred' response.

⁵⁸ A similar tradition is found in the hellenistic Jewish document *Let. Aris.*, as noted above. In this context, the introductory description of the sages is particularly illuminating in terms of the ideal of providing an unbeliever with the appropriate reply from the Torah: "They had a tremendous natural facility for the negotiations and questions arising from the Law ... [and] engaged in discourse and listening to and answering each and every one, as is meet and right" (*Let. Aris.* 122).

⁵⁹ Col 4:6. See also 1 Pet 3:15. The similarities between the exhortation of Col 4:6 and those of 'Abot 2:14 are striking and will be pursued at length in Chapter Ten.

⁶⁰ See Josephus *Against Apion* 2.282-283; Philo *Moses* 2.17-24.

⁶¹ The reference is to the corporate worship of God's people: the words 'sing' (שִׁיר) and 'bless' (בָּרַךְ) make this plain. The phrase 'all the earth' (כָּל-הָאָרֶץ), however, makes plain it is not the usual worship within the borders of Israel that is on view but a new world-wide scenario. A reference to the congregations of the Diaspora seems more likely, since the final exhortation of this call to worship (v.3) makes clear that those offering the worship do so "among the nations" (בְּגוֹיִם) and "among the peoples" (בְּכָל-הָעַמִּים), an obvious reference to the Gentiles throughout the earth.

This concept of public worship as a proclamation to the Gentiles finds ample evidence in several later Jewish texts.

Despite the contentions of Moore⁶² and (especially) of Georgi,⁶³ it does not appear that the synagogue, or any other religious ceremony of the Jews for that matter, was deliberately styled toward the conversion of outsiders.⁶⁴ McKnight is right to insist that such gatherings were pitched decidedly at the edification of the Jews themselves.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, this does not rule out the possibility that Jews were aware of the attractive power of their liturgical life – the synagogue in particular – and believed that the maintenance of synagogue worship provided one means by which Gentiles would embrace the true worship of God.⁶⁶ Several texts suggest this was precisely the case.

4.1. *On the Life of Moses 2.41-44*

One text which confirms Jewish consciousness of the attractive power of their liturgical life is *Moses 2.41-44*. The passage begins with Philo's insistence that the Greek Scriptures are in every way a worthy translation of the Hebrew, or the 'Chaldean', as he calls it. Indeed, the translators themselves are not, he claims, regarded as translators only but as prophets and priests. So great is the fame of these men and their divine work, says Philo:

⁶² Moore, *Judaism vol. 1*, 324.

⁶³ Georgi, *Opponents*, 83-89.

⁶⁴ On the form and function of the synagogue in the period see Safrai and Stern, *The Jewish People* vol 2, 908-44; and, more recently, Binder, *Into the Temple Courts*, 389-449.

⁶⁵ See the critique of Georgi's view in McKnight, *Light*, 62-66.

⁶⁶ It would be wrong to assume that just because the synagogue service was designed exclusively for Jewish worship this diminishes its (conscious) missionary function. An analogy is found in the early Christian gatherings. The exclusive purpose of corporate worship was the encouragement of Christians in their worship of God, and I can find no text in the New Testament which indicates a secondary evangelistic purpose. Nevertheless, in insisting that the Corinthians engage in intelligible speech for mutual edification, the apostle Paul indicates that such speech may lead a visiting 'outsider' to repentance and the worship of God (1 Cor 14:23-25). His exhortation does not at all require understanding the speech as pitched at the outsider – it is clear the prophecy is merely overheard by the visitor – but the outsider is nonetheless converted. It is precisely this sort of missionary consciousness that appears to have existed within some synagogues of the second temple period.

⁴¹ Therefore, even to the present day, there is held every year a feast and general assembly in the island of Pharos, whither not only Jews but multitudes of others (οὐκ Ἰουδαῖοι μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ παμπληθεῖς ἕτεροι) cross the water, both to do honour to the place in which the light of that version first shone out (ἐν ᾧ πρῶτον τὰ τῆς ἐρμηνείας ἐξέλαμψε.), and also to thank God for the good gift so old yet ever young.

⁴² But, after the prayers and thanksgivings, some fixing tents on the seaside and others reclining on the sandy beach in the open air feast with their relations and friends, counting that shore for the time a more magnificent lodging than the fine mansions in the royal precincts. ⁴³ Thus the laws are shewn to be desirable and precious in the eyes of all, ordinary citizens and rulers alike (οὕτω μὲν οἱ νόμοι ζηλωτοὶ καὶ περιμάχητοι πᾶσιν ἰδιώταις τε καὶ ἡγεμόσιν ἐπιδείκνυνται), and that too though our nation has not prospered for many a year (Trans. Colson, *LCL*).

Philo makes a special point of indicating the presence of Gentiles at this annual Jewish festival. He boasts that those who cross the water to camp on the beachside include “not only Jews” but “multitudes of others,” a description that however exaggerated nonetheless indicates the proud enthusiasm of the writer. The ‘great multitude’ of Gentiles probably does not refer to proselytes or God-fearers – despite the fact that they participate in the thanksgivings – since the point of Philo’s account (οὕτως 43) is to emphasize how the Jewish laws have been shown to be desirable and precious before “all, ordinary citizens and rulers alike,” a phrase which must signify those who do not already revere the laws. This is confirmed by the reference in the next paragraph (44 as discussed previously) to each nation abandoning “its peculiar ways, and, throwing overboard their ancestral customs, turn[ing] to honouring our laws alone.” Philo is saying that what happens each year on the famous Island of Pharos,⁶⁷ located in the harbour of Alexandria, is a mere glimpse of what could be if the fortunes of the Jewish people were greatly improved. That is, more unbelievers would turn to the Jewish laws.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ The Island of Pharos was home to one of the so called ‘Seven Wonders of the World’, the famous Pharos lighthouse. Built by Sostratus of Cnidus for Ptolemy II of Egypt in about 280 BC, it reportedly stood some 350 feet (110 m) high. The monument was still standing in the 12th century CE. See Strabo (late first century BCE), *Geography*, 17.1.6. for an account of the lighthouse.

⁶⁸ Compare *Moses* 1.147 where in speaking about the Gentiles coming out of Egypt with the Israelites Philo mentions those who, “reverencing the divine favour shewn to the people, had come over to them (ἐπηλύται ἐγένοντο), and such as were converted (μεταβάλλω) and brought to a wiser mind.” This has no basis in the Scriptural account and so probably reflects Philo’s belief that as Israel prospered Gentiles would be brought to Judaism.

This connection between 41-43 and 44 reveals the missionary import of the Pharos festival in Philo's mind. Had he ended at paragraph 43 we might have assumed that his interest was only in an 'apologetic' effect, that is, Gentiles coming to agree that the Jewish laws, like their own, were laudable.⁶⁹ However, paragraph 44 makes clear that Philo's interests were deeper. He entertained hopes of a much greater outcome. The Pharos festival had its good effect at a time when the Jewish people were not prospering. Imagine, surmises Philo, what would happen if the Jews began to flourish: unbelievers would not merely give thanks for the Jewish laws and join us at the occasional festival, they would abandon paganism entirely, turn, and revere the Torah together with the Jews. In the mind of Philo, therefore, the Pharos festival contains in miniature what could be eminently true of Jewish worship more widely: the power to draw Gentiles toward the laws of God.

4.2. Jewish War 7.45

A more explicit example of missionary consciousness in relation to Jewish liturgical life is found in Josephus' *J.W.* 7.45. In recounting the great fire of Antioch (November A.D. 70),⁷⁰ the blame for which had been laid at the feet of the Jews, Josephus offers an historical excursus to provide some background to the ill-feeling toward the Jews in that city. He claims it had to do with local resentment toward the growing size, wealth and prominence of the Jewish community. It is in this context that he makes reference to the missionary impact of Jewish worship:

Continuing to receive similar treatment from later monarchs, the Jewish colony grew in numbers, and their richly designed and costly offerings formed a splendid ornament to the temple. Moreover, they were constantly attracting to their religious ceremonies multitudes of Greeks (προσαγόμενοι ταῖς θρησκευαίαις πολὺ πλῆθος Ἑλλήνων), and these they had in some measure incorporated with themselves (κάκεινους τρόπῳ τινὶ μοῖραν αὐτῶν πεποίηγντο [Trans. Thackeray, *LCL*]).

We have observed already that the Jewish proselytizing activities in Rome had been the cause of great ill-feeling toward Jews and on two occasions had led to their expulsion from the city. Here a similar situation is

⁶⁹ This is precisely how Goodman, *Mission*, 74-75, interprets the passage. McKnight, *Light*, 39-40, on the other hand, cites this passage claiming it is perhaps "the most intense enthusiasm expressed by Philo for proselytes." He makes no further comment upon it and draws no conclusion from it.

⁷⁰ On this incident see Downey, *Antioch*, 204-206.

envisaged. Although the immediate cause of the massacre of Jews (winter of A.D. 66/67)⁷¹ reported by Josephus (*J.W.* 7.51) was a rumour about a Jewish plot to burn down the city, Josephus indicates that the underlying cause was a developing local resentment toward a Jewish community experiencing significant numerical growth.⁷² The fact that part of that growth was due to a multitude of native Syrians adopting Jewish θρησκεία only exacerbated the feeling.

The word θρησκεία can mean ‘religion’ in the abstract sense (LSJ 806)⁷³ and so the reference might be to Greeks converting to the Jewish religion, i.e., becoming proselytes.⁷⁴ However, the usual sense of θρησκεία is of a particular religious service or ceremony⁷⁵ and the fact that the word appears here in the plural clarifies that Josephus has in mind this latter meaning. Presumably, then, Josephus is referring to the regular synagogue services and perhaps also to various feasts and fasts.

The language is striking in its intensity and scale. Josephus does not say that the Greeks merely *were attracted* to the ceremonies but that the Antiochene Jews deliberately brought them to the services. The verb προσάγω does not mean ‘to attract’ but to ‘bring to’ or ‘lead to’, and the use of the middle voice implies personal intent on the part of the Jews.⁷⁶ What’s more, the Jews were doing this ‘always’ (ἀεί) and achieving considerable success in it (πολὺ πλῆθος). The result of all this was that these Greeks were (in some measure) “incorporated” by the Jews into their religious community (ποιέω – in middle form again). The phrase “in some measure” (τινὶ μοίρᾳ) does not so much mitigate the success of the Antiochene mission as betray an ambivalence on the part of Josephus

⁷¹ On this incident see Downey, *Antioch*, 198-200.

⁷² For an account of the rising anti-semitism in Antioch at this time see Downey, *Antioch*, 190-201.

⁷³ *J.W.*: 1.146, 2.198, 2.456, 2.561, 5.200, 6.442. New Testament: Acts 26:5, Jam 1:26, 27. LXX: 4 Macc 5:7, 13.

⁷⁴ So the old translation of *J.W.* 7.45 by William Whiston (*The Genuine and Complete Works of Flavius Josephus*. Dublin: Thomas Morton Bates, 1796) who renders the sentence: “They also made proselytes of a great many of the Greeks perpetually.”

⁷⁵ See *J.W.* 1.148, 1.150, 2.10, 2.42, 2.391, 2.414, 2.425, 2.518, 4.218, 4.275, 4.324, 5.198, 5.229, 6.427, 7.435.

⁷⁶ Conceded by Goodman, *Mission*, 66-67, who writes: “The use of the verb *prosago* in the middle form implied action by the Antiochene Jews on their own behalf, so it may be surmised that they wanted such Gentiles to join their rites and to become ‘in some way’ attached to their community.”

toward the status of these ‘converts’: they participated in Jewish worship but were only in ‘some measure’ members of the Jewish community.⁷⁷

The picture painted here of the Antiochene synagogue services accords well with Philo’s statement that synagogues “each seventh day ... stand wide open (ἀναπετάννυμι) in every city” (*Spec. Laws* 2.62). McKnight contends that neither the verb ἀναπετάννυμι nor the wider context of the passage in any way implies the presence of Gentiles.⁷⁸ However, the fact that this discussion arises to explain what Jews do on the Sabbath, as McKnight himself notes, suggests that Philo has a Gentile readership in mind at this particular point. In such a context, the use of this unusual verb, ἀναπετάννυμι, does imply that Philo wants to indicate that these ‘schools of virtue’, as he calls them, are wide open to all, Jew and Gentile alike.

Acts 13:42-48 corroborates the scenario described in *Spec. Laws* 2.62 and *J.W.* 7.45. At the end of Paul’s speech in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch he is invited to return the following week (v.42) and continue his teaching. The following sabbath “almost the whole city gathered” to hear the apostle’s second installment (v.44). That this gathering took place at the synagogue is clear from both the context and the use of the verb συνάγω. That the audience included Gentiles is clear from their response in v.48. I am not inferring from this that missionary preaching was normative in the synagogue, only that the sabbath service was an occasion open to Gentiles, a phenomenon which, according to Josephus, occurred *en masse*, regularly and with great missionary success just two decades later in Antioch of Syria.⁷⁹

McKnight concedes the general missionary import of *J.W.* 7.45 but plays down its significance by stressing that it “says nothing clear about leading Gentiles to synagogue services so that the Gentiles can hear an ‘evangelistic or propagandistic sermon’ on the Torah.”⁸⁰ His point is

⁷⁷ Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul Between Damascus and Antioch*, 50-54, have drawn attention to the large numbers of ‘god-fearers’ in another major city of Syria, Damascus. In *J.W.* 2.560 Josephus speaks of the wives of the local inhabitants of the city “who, with few exceptions, had all become converts to the Jewish religion (ὕπηγμέναι τῇ Ἰουδαϊκῇ θρησκείᾳ. [Trans. Thackeray, *LCL*].” While nothing can be said from this description – which, in any case, is probably somewhat exaggerated – about the means by which the women were ‘led’ (ὕπάγω) to the religion of the Jews, the example of the Antiochene Jews, deliberately leading Greeks to their religious services, provides a suggestive parallel. Hengel and Schwemer rightly point to *J.W.* 2.462-463 also as further evidence of the prevalence of Jewish ‘sympathizers’ (called τοὺς Ἰουδαίζοντας by Josephus) throughout Syria.

⁷⁸ McKnight, *Light*, 63.

⁷⁹ P. Borgen, “Proselytes, Conquest, and Mission,” 62-63, proposes another line of evidence for the powerful attraction of the synagogue: the problem of Christians attending the synagogue in the second to the fourth centuries (CE), a not uncommon topic of admonition in early Christian writings.

⁸⁰ McKnight, *Light*, 65.

directed against Georgi who, as noted above, has argued that synagogues had a deliberate missionary ‘pitch’, expressed especially in its Torah instruction.⁸¹ My contention is quite different. That synagogue preaching and liturgy were directed at Jews exclusively seems to be a natural conclusion from the available evidence. However, the question of the missionary function of the synagogue is not so easily settled. The above texts imply that (in the minds of some Jews) it was precisely as the faithful engaged in their divinely appointed θρησκεία that Gentiles – brought within ear-shot of the true worship of God – would turn to Judaism.⁸²

One final text is offered in support of the thesis that normative worship of God – through the synagogue service – provided a context for Gentile conversion to Judaism.

4.3. Tobit 13:3-6

The book of Tobit is the product of the Diaspora, probably dating from the second half of the second century (B.C.).⁸³ In the context of a pious adventure it provides an exhortation to the reader to remain faithful to the worship of God in the midst of a pagan world. As Moses had composed a song at the close of his life as a witness to the people of Israel (Deut 31-32) so too the aged Tobit offers his own climactic psalm of comfort and warning:

³ Acknowledge him before the nations (ἐνώπιον τῶν ἐθνῶν), O children of Israel; for he has scattered you among them. ⁴ He has shown you his greatness even there. Exalt him in the presence of every living being (ἐνώπιον παντὸς ζῶντος), because he is our Lord and he is our God; he is our Father and he is God forever. ⁵ He will afflict you for your iniquities, but he will again show mercy on all of you. He will gather you from all the nations among whom you have been scattered. ⁶ If you turn to him with all your heart and with all your soul, to do what is true before him, then he will turn to you and will no longer hide his face from you. So now see what he has done for you; acknowledge him at the top of your voice. Bless the Lord of

⁸¹ Georgi, *Opponents*, 85.

⁸² Such a viewpoint finds a ready analogy in many mainline churches today. While some Christians believe in gearing their services toward the outsider, many others insist that traditional liturgical patterns provide the best context in which both insider and outsider are drawn toward the ‘right’ worship of God. It is just such a thing that probably occurred in the synagogues of ancient Antioch.

⁸³ So, Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit: Übersetzt und ausgelegt*, 39; Moore, *Tobit: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 40-42; Zimmerman, *The Book of Tobit: An English Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 21-27. Where in the Diaspora remains completely unresolved.

righteousness, and exalt the King of the ages.⁸⁴ In the land of my exile I acknowledge him (ἐν τῇ γῆ τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας μου ἔξομολογοῦμαι αὐτῷ), and show his power and majesty to a nation of sinners (δεικνύω τὴν ἰσχὺν καὶ τὴν μεγαλωσύνην αὐτοῦ ἔθνει ἁμαρτωλῶν): ‘Turn back, you sinners, and do what is right (ἐπιστρέψατε ἁμαρτωλοί καὶ ποιήσατε δικαιοσύνην) before him; perhaps he may look with favor upon you and show you mercy.’

The principal exhortation of the passage (evident in v.3 and twice in v.6) calls for the public ‘acknowledgement’ of God. The word ἔξομολογέω here denotes the confession of a fact in the face of potential denial or opposition. In this context, it refers to the confession in a pagan environment of one’s allegiance to God. The form of this acknowledgment is public worship. The ‘sons of Israel’ are to ‘exalt’ him (ὑψώω) and ‘bless’ him (εὐλογέω), words which recall the corporate praise of God reflected in the Psalms (65, 102, 103, 133, 144, 148, among many others) and which clearly point to the θρησκεία of the Diaspora synagogue. Thus, the readers are here urged to remain faithful to and enthusiastic in their gathered praise of the living God. Even the call in v.6a to turn back to the Lord probably has as one of its main concerns the rejuvenation of public worship, since the rest of the paragraph (v.6b) resumes the themes of ‘acknowledging’, ‘blessing’, and ‘exalting’.

What is especially striking about the passage is the way Gentiles are portrayed as spectators of this Jewish worship. The confession is ‘before the nations’ and ‘in the land of exile’, and the exaltation is “in the presence of every living being.” Furthermore, through this act of corporate worship one ‘displays’ (δεικνύω) the power and majesty of God to ‘a nation of sinners’. While Schüngel-Straumann interprets the description here as referring to the author’s own (Jewish) people,⁸⁵ Moore is probably correct to take it as a reference to the nation of exile, since in the former case we would expect λαός not ἔθνος, and the central point throughout the whole passage has been the public praise of God’s greatness *before the Gentiles*.⁸⁶ Furthermore, in v.5 the writer indicated that God had already displayed his greatness to the Jews in exile and that this provided them with a reason to praise him among the Gentiles. An exhortation here at the

⁸⁴ After copying the phrase τὸν βασιλέα τῶν αἰώνων the eye of the copyist of *Sinaiticus* jumped to the identical phrase in v.10. Thus, we rely on Vaticanus and Alexandrinus (and the Old Latin) for vv.7-10a. A portion of the verses is preserved in 4Q196 Frag. 17 col. II.

⁸⁵ Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit*, 170.

⁸⁶ Moore, *Tobit*, 279.

conclusion now to display (through public worship) to the Gentiles the greatness they have been shown is a most natural reading.

This being the case, the final demand, “Turn back, you sinners” (ἐπιστρέψατε ἁμαρτωλοί), is to be read as a call to the ‘nation of sinners’ (ἔθνει ἁμαρτωλῶν) to respond with repentance to the Jewish worship they have witnessed.⁸⁷ The immediate proximity of the two references to ἁμαρτωλοί demands that they refer to the same people, and the shift in rhetorical audience (from Jewish readership to the pagan ‘sinners’) required by this reading is already implied in the abrupt nature of the ensuing imperative, lacking as it does any connective.

It might be thought that a call for Gentiles to repent is out of place in such a text.⁸⁸ However, several things must be noted. First, as Zimmerman⁸⁹ and Schüngel-Straumann⁹⁰ themselves point out, the author of Tobit relies to some extent on the traditions of the book of Jonah. The central place given in that book to the theme of Gentile repentance would not have escaped the notice of the author of Tobit. Secondly, the language of Tob 13:6b⁹¹ in particular is, as Moore observes,⁹² reminiscent of the decree of repentance pronounced by the Gentile king in Jonah 3:8-9.⁹³ Thirdly, as previously discussed, Tobit 13:11 and 14:6 betray a keen interest in the conversion (ἐπιστρέφω) of the Gentiles.⁹⁴ An explicit (albeit rhetorical) call for Gentile repentance just paragraphs before is

⁸⁷ So also Moore, *Tobit*, 270.

⁸⁸ Zimmerman, *Tobit*, 114, and Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit*, 170, prefer to see a reference to Israel in 13:6b.

⁸⁹ Zimmerman, *Tobit*, 22.

⁹⁰ Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit*, 39.

⁹¹ Tob 13:6b ἐπιστρέψατε ... ποιήσατε δικαιοσύνην ... τίς γινώσκει εἰ θελήσει ὑμᾶς καὶ ποιήσει ἐλεημοσύνην ὑμῖν.

⁹² Moore, *Tobit*, 279.

⁹³ Jonah 3:8-9 – ἀπέστρεψαν ἕκαστος ... ἀπὸ τῆς ἀδικίας ... τίς οἶδεν εἰ μετανοήσει ὁ θεὸς καὶ ἀποστρέψει ἐξ ὀργῆς θυμοῦ αὐτοῦ.

⁹⁴ “A bright light will shine to all the ends of the earth (φῶς λαμπρὸν λάμπει εἰς πάντα τὰ πέρατα τῆς γῆς); many nations will come to you from far away, the inhabitants of the remotest parts of the earth to your holy name, bearing gifts in their hands for the King of heaven” (*Tob.* 13:13). That this is not merely a subjugation of the Gentiles before Israel is implied by the fact that the gifts are for God, not Israel. Also, those Gentiles are described in the following verse as ‘blessed forever’ (v.14 – εὐλογητοὶ ἔσονται πάντες εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα). The theme is even more explicit in *Tob.* 14:6: “Then the nations in the whole world will all be converted (ἐπιστρέφω) and worship God in truth. They will all abandon their idols, which deceitfully have led them into their error; and in righteousness they will praise the eternal God.”

perfectly in keeping with the author's perspective. Fourthly, similar demands for pagan conversion may be found in both Scripture (Isa. 49:1-6) and later Jewish literature (*Sib. Or.* 3.732-740⁹⁵), as observed already. Of course, all of this is not to say that Tobit was to be read by Gentiles. The demand is plainly rhetorical and serves to remind the Jewish readership of the response God demands of the Gentiles as they witness the exuberant θρησκεία of the synagogue.

This interpretation helps us to understand the unusual statement at the beginning of the passage. In v.3 the writer calls on the readers to acknowledge God before the nations "for he has scattered you among them" (ὅτι αὐτὸς διέσπειρεν ὑμᾶς ἐν αὐτοῖς). The presence of ὅτι is surprising in that it suggests that the dispersion of Israel among the nations provides a positive ground for confessing him in corporate worship. As Schüngel-Straumann states: "Dem Exil wird ein positiver Sinn abgewonnen: Gott führte ins Exil, damit er auch dort unter den Völkern gepriesen werden kann."⁹⁶ That 'positive sense' of the Exile is, I suggest, the fact that it provides the nations with an opportunity to observe the true worship of God and so turn to him for mercy in anticipation of the final conversion of the nations at the end of history (Tob 14:6).⁹⁷

The synagogue was not a missionary institution in the sense argued by Georgi but the above evidence suggests that some Jews were profoundly conscious of the importance of conducting their worship throughout the lands of the Diaspora in the hope that as pagans observed and sometimes participated in the θρησκεία of the Jews they would learn and embrace true piety.⁹⁸ Kasting is probably correct to suggest that among the various

⁹⁵ Compare also the particularly striking example in *Sib. Or.* 3.625-628. After a list of God's judgements against the nations (601-624), the writer exhorts: "But you, devious mortal, do not tarry in hesitation but turn back, converted, and propitiate God (παλίμπλαγκτος στρέψας θεὸν ἰλάσκοιο). Sacrifice to God hundreds of bulls and firstborn lambs and goats at the recurring times. But propitiate him, the immortal god, so that he may have pity (ἀλλά μιν ἰλάσκου, θεὸν ἄμβροτον, αἶ κ' ἐλεήση) for he alone is God and there is no other (αὐτὸς γὰρ μόνος ἐστὶ θεὸς κούκ ἔστιν ἕτ' ἄλλος)."

⁹⁶ Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit*, 170.

⁹⁷ As McKnight notes (*Light*, 42), several Jewish writers "saw Israel's dispersion as divinely intended for making proselytes." See, for instance, *T. Levi* 14:4 and *Wis* 18:4. In addition, McKnight cites *b. Pesah*. 87b.

⁹⁸ "No doubt the teaching of the synagogue was primarily directed toward the Jewish audience, but the interpretation of Jewish tradition presented was thoroughly Hellenistic and accessible to interested Gentiles" (J. J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 185).

mission activities of Diaspora Jews, the synagogue service may well have exercised the largest missionary effect.⁹⁹

5. Conclusion: mission in Judaism

In Chapter One I concluded with the rather limited statement that in our period of investigation *some* Jewish teachers (including the zealous Saul of Tarsus) took it upon themselves to win the Gentiles to the way of the Torah. They thus functioned in a manner analogous to that of a ‘missionary’, as unfashionable as such a description has become in recent scholarship.

However, we have insisted from the outset that an investigation into mission does not end merely with evidence of Jewish missionaries. Rather, it must take into account the full range of activities oriented toward the conversion of non-believers. Our investigation of such *mission-commitment* among Jews produced important results. It was found that although an obligation explicitly to proclaim the Torah to Gentiles is absent from the relevant literature, an array of texts, from both Palestinian and Diaspora contexts, do urge their respective Jewish communities to promote the virtues of Judaism amongst pagans.

Most dominant of all was the obligation, apparently premised on the notion of priestly presence (Exodus 19:5-6), to engage in ‘ethical apologetic’, or Torah-obedience oriented toward the transformation of the pagan. Mission as prayer also features in the literature. Just as Solomon in 1 Kings 8:41-43 had beseeched Yahweh to grant the knowledge of God to the Gentiles, so several Jewish writers encouraged their readers to engage in similar intercessions. Some evidence, furthermore, was found for ‘verbal apologetic’, or unstructured forms of persuasion oriented toward the promotion of Judaism and the winning of Gentiles to the worship of God. Finally, it was discovered that some aspects of Jewish liturgical life, performed a missionary function. In particular, Jews (in Antioch at least and perhaps also in Alexandria) appear deliberately to have drawn Gentiles to the synagogue service. This was done not so that outsiders might hear an ‘evangelistically’ oriented Torah address, but so that they might observe the true worship of God and thus learn to embrace right piety for themselves.

⁹⁹ Kasting, *Die Anfänge der urchristlichen Mission*, 19. See also his chapter 2 in the same volume, “Freunde der Synagoge und Proselyten,” 22-27.

Mission-commitment thus found two-fold expression amongst Jews in the period leading up to the rise of Christianity. On the one hand, some Jewish teachers engaged in explicit (albeit occasional) Torah-instruction of Gentiles and, on the other, Jewish adherents more generally were expected to promote the Torah through a range of more subtle, though apparently no less effective, forms of missionary partnership.

This conclusion becomes highly significant as we turn in the rest of the study to describe the missionary paradigm of the apostle Paul.¹⁰⁰ For the same two-fold expression of mission-commitment emerges with great clarity in the Pauline epistles: Paul and his co-workers engaged in extensive missionary *proclamation* among the Gentiles, while converts more generally devoted themselves to the *promotion* of the gospel through a range of activities strongly reminiscent of that described above in relation to Jewish communities of the period. We begin in Chapter Three, then, with an account of Paul's central missionary concept, 'heralding the gospel'.

¹⁰⁰ P. Borgen, "Proselytes, Conquest, and Mission," 72-74, has already argued that the 'matrix' of Christian mission "was the Jewish notions of proselytism, eschatology, and conquest." He points to three shared features: 1) The active and conscious reaching out to the nations; 2) The basis of the mission being the sovereignty of the universal God; 3) The notion of peaceful conquest of the nations. Daube, "Missionary Maxims in Paul," 336-61, explores the Jewish antecedents of certain missionary motifs in Paul, 1 Peter and the Gospels. These include: 1) To 'win' a person; 2) Good works leading to the honour of God; 3) The principle of accommodation. Our study will provide greater substance and detail to these observations.