

**Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, 12.12-118;**

Antiq. 12:11 ¶ (12.2.1) When Alexander had reigned twelve years, and after him Ptolemy Soter forty years, Philadelphus then took the kingdom of Egypt, and held it forty years within one. He procured the law to be interpreted,<sup>1</sup> and set free those that were come from Jerusalem into Egypt, and were in slavery there, who were a hundred and twenty thousand. The occasion was this:—

Antiq. 12:12 (12.2.1) Demetrius Phalerius, who was library keeper to the king, was now endeavoring, if it were possible, to gather together all the books that were in the habitable earth, and buying whatsoever was anywhere valuable, or agreeable to the king's inclination (who was very earnestly set upon collecting of books); to which inclination of his Demetrius was zealously subservient.

Antiq. 12:13 (12.2.1) And when once Ptolemy asked him how many ten thousands of books he had collected, he replied, that he had already about twenty times ten thousand; but that, in a little time, he should have fifty times ten thousand.

Antiq. 12:14 (12.2.1) But he said, he had been informed that there were many books of laws among the Jews worthy of inquiring after, and worthy of the king's library, but which, being written in characters and in a dialect of their own, will cause no small pains in getting them translated into the Greek tongue:

Antiq. 12:15 (12.2.1) that the character in which they are written seems to be like to that which is the proper character of the Syrians, and that its sound, when pronounced, is like to theirs also; and that this sound appears to be peculiar to themselves.

Wherefore he said, that nothing hindered why they might not get those books to be translated also; for while nothing is wanting that is necessary for that purpose, we may have their books also in this library.

Antiq. 12:16 (12.2.1) So the king thought that Demetrius was very zealous to procure him abundance of books, and that he suggested what was exceeding proper for him to do; and therefore he wrote to the Jewish high priest that he should act accordingly.

Antiq. 12:17 ¶ (12.2.2) Now there was one Aristeus, who was among the king's most intimate friends, and, on account of his modesty, very acceptable to him. This Aristeus resolved frequently, and that before now, to petition the king that he would set all the captive Jews in his kingdom free;

Antiq. 12:18 (12.2.2) and he thought this to be a convenient opportunity for the making that petition. So he discoursed, in the first place, with the captains of the king's guards, Sosibius of Tarentum, and Andreas, and persuaded them to assist him in what he was going to intercede with the king for.

Antiq. 12:19 (12.2.2) Accordingly Aristeus embraced the same opinion with those that have been before mentioned, and went to the king and made the following speech to him:

Antiq. 12:20 (12.2.2) "It is not fit for us, O king, to overlook things hastily, or to deceive ourselves, but to lay the truth open: for since we have determined not only to get the laws of the Jews transcribed, but interpreted also, for thy satisfaction, by what

means can we do this, while so many of the Jews are now slaves in thy kingdom?

Antiq. 12:21 (12.2.2) Do thou then what will be agreeable to thy magnanimity, and to thy good nature: free them from the miserable condition they are in, because that God, who supporteth thy kingdom, was the author of their laws,

Antiq. 12:22 (12.2.2) as I have learned by particular inquiry; for both these people and we also worship the same God, the framer of all things. We call him, and that truly, by the name of Ζηνα [or life, or Jupiter], because he breathes life into all men.

Wherefore, do thou restore these men to their own country; and this do to the honor of God, because these men pay a peculiarly excellent worship to him.

Antiq. 12:23 (12.2.2) And know this farther, that though I be not of kin to them by birth, nor one of the same country with them, yet do I desire these favors to be done them, since all men are the workmanship of God; and I am sensible that he is well pleased with those that do good. I do therefore put up this petition to thee, to do good to them.”

Antiq. 12:24 ¶ (12.2.3) When Aristeus was saying thus, the king looked upon him with a cheerful and joyful countenance, and said, “How many ten thousands dost thou suppose there are of such as want to be made free?” To which Andreas replied, as he stood by, and said, “A few more than ten times ten thousand.” The king made answer, “And is this a small gift that thou askest, Aristeus?”

Antiq. 12:25 (12.2.3) But Sosibius, and the rest that stood by, said, that he ought to offer such a thank offering as was worthy of his greatness of soul, to that God who had given him his kingdom. With this answer he was much pleased; and gave order, that when they paid the soldiers their wages, they should lay down [a hundred and] twenty drachmae for every one of the slaves.<sup>2</sup>

Antiq. 12:26 (12.2.3) And he promised to publish a magnificent decree, about what they requested, which should confirm what Aristeus had proposed, and especially what God willed should be done; whereby, he said, he would not only set those free who had been led away captive by his father and his army, but those who were in his kingdom before, and those also, if any such there were, who had been brought away since.

Antiq. 12:27 (12.2.3) And when they said that their redemption money would amount to above four hundred talents, he granted it. A copy of which decree I have determined to preserve, that the magnanimity of this king may be known.

Antiq. 12:28 (12.2.3) Its contents were as follows: “Let all those who were soldiers under our father, and who, when they overran Syria and Phoenicia, and laid waste Judea, took the Jews captives, and made them slaves, and brought them into our cities, and into this country, and then sold them; as also all those that were in my kingdom before them, and if there be any that have lately been brought thither, be made free by those that possess them; and let them accept of [a hundred and] twenty drachmae for every slave. And let the soldiers receive this redemption money with their pay, but the rest out of the king’s treasury;

Antiq. 12:29 (12.2.3) for I suppose that they were made captives without our father’s consent, and against equity; and that their country was harassed by the insolence of the soldiers, and that, by removing them into Egypt, the soldiers have made a great profit by them.

Antiq. 12:30 (12.2.3) Out of regard, therefore, to justice, and out of pity to those that

have been tyrannized over, contrary to equity, I enjoin those that have such Jews in their service to set them at liberty, upon the receipt of the before-mentioned sum; and that no one use any deceit about them, but obey what is here commanded.

Antiq. 12:31 (12.2.3) And I will, that they give in their names within three days after the publication of this edict, to such as are appointed to execute the same, and to produce the same slaves before them also, for I think it will be for the advantage of my affairs; and let everyone that will, inform against those that do not obey this decree; and I will, that their estates be confiscated into the king's treasury."

Antiq. 12:32 (12.2.3) When this decree was read to the king, it at first contained the rest that is here inserted, and only omitted those Jews that had formerly been brought, and those brought afterwards, which had not been distinctly mentioned; so he added these clauses out of his humanity, and with great generosity. He also gave order that the payment, which was likely to be done in a hurry, should be divided among the king's ministers, and among the officers of his treasury.

Antiq. 12:33 (12.2.3) When this was over, what the king had decreed was quickly brought to a conclusion; and this in no more than seven day's time, the number of the talents paid for the captives being above four hundred and sixty, and this, because their masters required the [hundred and] twenty drachmae for the children also, the king having, in effect, commanded that these should be paid for, when he said, in his decree, that they should receive the forementioned sum for every slave.

Antiq. 12:34 ¶ (12.2.4) Now when this had been done after so magnificent a manner, according to the king's inclinations, he gave order to Demetrius to give him in writing his sentiments concerning the transcribing of the Jewish books; for no part of the administration is done rashly by these kings, but all things are managed with great circumspection.

Antiq. 12:35 (12.2.4) On which account I have subjoined a copy of these epistles, and set down the multitude of the vessels sent as gifts [to Jerusalem], and the construction of every one, that the exactness of the artificers' workmanship, as it appeared to those that saw them, and which workmen made every vessel, may be made manifest, and this on account of the excellency of the vessels themselves. Now the copy of the epistle was to this purpose:—

Antiq. 12:36 (12.2.4) "Demetrius to the great king. When thou, O king, gavest me a charge concerning the collection of Books that were wanting to fill your library, and concerning the care that ought to be taken about such as are imperfect, I have used the utmost diligence about those matters. And I let you know, that we want the books of Jewish legislation, with some others; for they are written in the Hebrew characters, and being in the language of that nation, are to us unknown.

Antiq. 12:37 (12.2.4) It hath also happened to them, that they have been transcribed more carelessly than they should have been, because they have not had hitherto royal care taken about them. Now it is necessary that thou shouldst have accurate copies of them. And indeed this legislation is full of hidden wisdom, and entirely blameless, as being the legislation of God;

Antiq. 12:38 (12.2.4) for which cause it is, as Hecateus of Abdera says, that the poets and historians make no mention of it, nor of those men who lead their lives according to it, since it is a holy law, and ought not to be published by profane mouths.

Antiq. 12:39 (12.2.4) If then it please thee, O king, thou mayest write to the high priest

of the Jews, to send six of the elders out of every tribe, and those such as are more skillful of the laws, that by their means we may learn the clear and agreeing sense of these books, and may obtain an accurate interpretation of their contents, and so may have such a collection of these as may be suitable to thy desire.”

Antiq. 12:40 ¶ (12.2.5) When this epistle was sent to the king, he commanded that an epistle should be drawn up for Eleazar, the Jewish high priest, concerning these matters; and that they should inform him of the release of the Jews that had been in slavery among them. He also sent fifty talents of gold for the making of large basins, and vials, and cups, and an immense quantity of precious stones.

Antiq. 12:41 (12.2.5) He also gave order to those who had the custody of the chests that contained those stones, to give the artificers leave to choose out what sorts of them they pleased. He withal appointed, that a hundred talents in money should be sent to the temple for sacrifices and for other uses.

Antiq. 12:42 (12.2.5) Now I will give a description of these vessels and the manner of their construction, but not till after I have set down a copy of the epistle which was written to Eleazar the high priest, who had obtained that dignity on the occasion following:—

Antiq. 12:43 (12.2.5) When Onias the high priest was dead, his son Simon became his successor. He was called Simon the Just,<sup>3</sup> because of both his piety towards God, and his kind disposition to those of his own nation.

Antiq. 12:44 (12.2.5) When he was dead, and had left a young son, who was called Onias, Simon’s brother Eleazar, of whom we are speaking, took the high priesthood; and he it was to whom Ptolemy wrote, and that in the manner following:—

Antiq. 12:45 (12.2.5) “King Ptolemy to Eleazar the high priest, sendeth greeting. There are many Jews who now dwell in my kingdom, whom the Persians, when they were in power, carried captives. These were honored by my father; some of whom he placed in the army, and gave them greater pay than ordinary, to others of them, when they came with him into Egypt, he committed his garrisons, and the guarding of them, that they might be a terror to the Egyptians;

Antiq. 12:46 (12.2.5) and when I had taken the government, I treated all men with humanity, and especially those that are thy fellow citizens, of whom I have set free above a hundred thousand that were slaves, and paid the price of their redemption to their masters out of my own revenues;

Antiq. 12:47 (12.2.5) and those that are of a fit age, I have admitted into the number of my soldiers; and for such as are capable of being faithful to me, and proper for my court, I have put them in such a post, as thinking this [kindness done to them] to be a very great and an acceptable gift, which I devote to God for his providence over me;

Antiq. 12:48 (12.2.5) and as I am desirous to do what will be grateful to these, and to all the other Jews in the habitable earth, I have determined to procure an interpretation of your law, and to have it translated out of Hebrew into Greek, and to be deposited in my library.

Antiq. 12:49 (12.2.5) Thou wilt therefore do well to choose out and send to me men of good character, who are now elders in age, and six in number out of every tribe. These, by their age, must be skillful in the laws, and of abilities to make an accurate interpretation of them; and when this shall be finished, I shall think that I have done a work glorious to myself;

Antiq. 12:50 (12.2.5) and I have sent to thee Andreas, the captain of my guard, and Aristeus, men whom I have in very great esteem; by whom I have sent those firstfruits which I have dedicated to the temple, and to the sacrifices, and to other uses, to the value of a hundred talents; and if thou wilt send to us, to let us know what thou wouldst have further, thou wilt do a thing acceptable to me.”

Antiq. 12:51 ¶ (12.2.6) When this epistle of the king was brought to Eleazar, he wrote an answer to it with all the respect possible:—“Eleazar the high priest to king Ptolemy, sendeth greeting. If thou and thy queen Arsinoe,<sup>4</sup> and thy children, be well, we are entirely satisfied.

Antiq. 12:52 (12.2.6) When we received thy epistle, we greatly rejoiced at thy intentions; and when the multitude were gathered together, we read it to them, and thereby made them sensible of the piety thou hast towards God.

Antiq. 12:53 (12.2.6) We also showed them the twenty vials of gold, and thirty of silver, and the five large basins, and the table for the shewbread; and also the hundred talents for the sacrifices, and for the making what shall be needful at the temple: which things Andreas and Aristeus, those most honored friends of thine, have brought us; and truly they are persons of an excellent character, and of great learning, and worthy of thy virtue.

Antiq. 12:54 (12.2.6) Know then that we will gratify thee in what is for thy advantage, though we do what we used not to do before; for we ought to make a return for the numerous acts of kindness which thou hast done to our countrymen.

Antiq. 12:55 (12.2.6) We immediately, therefore, offered sacrifices for thee and thy sister, with thy children and friends; and the multitude made prayers, that thy affairs may be to thy mind; and that thy kingdom may be preserved in peace, and that the translation of our law may come to the conclusion thou desirest, and be for thy advantage.

Antiq. 12:56 (12.2.6) We have also chosen six elders out of every tribe, whom we have sent, and the law with them. It will be thy part, out of thy piety and justice to send back the law when it hath been translated; and to return those to us that bring it in safety.—Farewell.”

Antiq. 12:57 ¶ (12.2.7) This was the reply which the high priest made; but it does not seem to me to be necessary to set down the names of the seventy [two] elders who were sent by Eleazar, and carried the law, which yet were subjoined at the end of the epistle.

Antiq. 12:58 (12.2.7) However, I thought it not improper to give an account of those very valuable and artificially contrived vessels which the king sent to God, that all may see how great a regard the king had for God; for the king allowed a vast deal of expenses for these vessels, and came often to the workmen, and viewed their works, and suffered nothing of carelessness or negligence to be any damage to their operations;

Antiq. 12:59 (12.2.7) and I will relate how rich they were as well as I am able, although, perhaps, the nature of this history may not require such a description; but I imagine I shall thereby recommend the elegant taste and magnanimity of this king to those that read this history.

Antiq. 12:60 ¶ (12.2.8) And first I will describe what belongs to the table. It was indeed in the king’s mind to make this table vastly large in its dimensions; but then he gave

orders that they should learn what was the magnitude of the table which was already at Jerusalem, and how large it was, and whether there were a possibility of making one larger than it;

Antiq. 12:61 (12.2.8) and when he was informed how large that was which was already there, and that nothing hindered but a larger might be made, he said that he was willing to have one made that should be five times as large as the present table; but his fear was that it might be then useless in their sacred ministrations by its too great largeness; for he desired that the gifts he presented them should not only be there for show, but should be useful also in their sacred ministrations.

Antiq. 12:62 (12.2.8) According to which reasoning, that the former table was made of so moderate a size for use, and not for want of gold, he resolved that he would not exceed the former table in largeness, but would make it exceed it in the variety and elegancy of its materials;

Antiq. 12:63 (12.2.8) and as he was sagacious in observing the nature of all things, and in having a just notion of what was new and surprising, and where there were no sculptures, he would invent such as were proper by his own skill, and would show them to the workmen, he commanded that such sculptures would now be made; and that those which were delineated should be most accurately formed by a constant regard to their delineation.

Antiq. 12:64 ¶ (12.2.9) When therefore the workmen had undertaken to make the table, they framed it in length two cubits [and a half], in breadth one cubit, and in height one cubit and a half; and the entire structure of the work was of gold. They withal made a crown of a handbreadth round it, with wavework wreathed about it, and with an engraving which imitated a cord, and was admirably turned on its three parts;

Antiq. 12:65 (12.2.9) for as they were of a triangular figure, every angle had the same disposition of its sculptures, that when you turned them about, the very same form of them was turned about without any variation. Now that part of the crownwork that was enclosed under the table had its sculptures very beautiful; but that part which went round on the outside was more elaborately adorned with most beautiful ornaments, because it was exposed to sight, and to the view of the spectators;

Antiq. 12:66 (12.2.9) for which reason it was that both those sides which were extant above the rest were acute, and none of the angles, which we before told you were three, appeared less than another when the table was turned about. Now into the cordwork thus turned were precious stones inserted, in rows parallel one to the other enclosed in golden buttons, which had ouches in them;

Antiq. 12:67 (12.2.9) but the parts which were on the side of the crown and were exposed to the sight, were adorned with a row of oval figures obliquely placed, of the most excellent sort of precious stones, which imitated rods laid close, and encompassed the table round about;

Antiq. 12:68 (12.2.9) but under these oval figures thus engraven, the workmen had put a crown all round it, where the nature of all sorts of fruit was represented, insomuch that the bunches of grapes hung up; and when they had made the stones to represent all the kinds of fruit before mentioned, and that each in its proper color, they made them fast with gold round the whole table.

Antiq. 12:69 (12.2.9) The like disposition of the oval figures, and of the engraved rods, was framed under the crown, that the table might on each side show the same

appearance of variety and elegancy of its ornaments, so that neither the position of the wavework nor of the crown might be different, although the table were turned on the other side, but that the prospect of the same artificial contrivances might be extended as far as the feet;

Antiq. 12:70 (12.2.9) for there was made a plate of gold four fingers broad, through the entire breadth of the table, into which they inserted the feet, and then fastened them to the table by buttons and buttonholes, at the place where the crown was situate, that so on what side soever of the table one should stand, it might exhibit the very same view of the exquisite workmanship, and of the vast expenses bestowed upon it;

Antiq. 12:71 (12.2.9) but upon the table itself they engraved a meander, inserting into it very valuable stones in the middle, like stars, of various colors; the carbuncle and the emerald, each of which sent out agreeable rays of light to the spectators; with such stones of other sorts also as were most curious and best esteemed, as being most precious in their kind.

Antiq. 12:72 (12.2.9) Hard by this meander a texture of network ran round it, the middle which appeared like a rhombus, into which were inserted rock-crystal and amber, which, by the great resemblance of the appearance they made, gave wonderful delight to those that saw them.

Antiq. 12:73 (12.2.9) The chapters of the feet imitated the first budding of lilies, while their leaves were bent and laid under the table but so that the chives were seen standing upright within them.

Antiq. 12:74 (12.2.9) Their bases were made of a carbuncle; and one palm deep, and eight fingers in breadth.

Antiq. 12:75 (12.2.9) Now they had engraven upon it, with a very fine tool, and with a great deal of pains, a branch of ivy, and tendrils of the vine, sending forth clusters of grapes, that you would guess they were nowise different from real tendrils; for they were so very thin, and so very far extended at their extremities, that they were moved with the wind, and made one believe that they were the product of nature, and not the representation of art.

Antiq. 12:76 (12.2.9) They also made the entire workmanship of the table appear to be threefold, while the joints of the several parts were so united together as to be invisible, and the places where they joined could not be distinguished. Now the thickness of the table was not less than half a cubit.

Antiq. 12:77 (12.2.9) So that this gift, by the king's great generosity, by the great value of the materials, and the variety of its exquisite structure, and the artificer's skill in imitating nature with graving tools, was at length brought to perfection, while the king was very desirous, that though in largeness it were not to be different from that which was already dedicated to God, yet that in exquisite workmanship and the novelty of the contrivances, and in the splendor of its construction, it should far exceed it, and be more illustrious than that was.

Antiq. 12:78 ¶ (12.2.10) Now of the cisterns of gold there were two, whose sculpture was of scalework, from its basis to its belt-like circle, with various sorts of stones enchased in the spiral circles.

Antiq. 12:79 (12.2.10) Next to which there was upon it a meander of a cubit in height; it was composed of stones of all sorts of colors; and next to this was the rodwork engraven; and next to that was a rhombus in a texture of network, drawn out to the

brim of the basin,

Antiq. 12:80 (12.2.10) while small shields, made of stones, beautiful in their kind, and of four fingers' depth, filled up the middle parts. About the top of the basin were wreathed the leaves of lilies, and of the convolvulus, and the tendrils of vines in a circular manner;

Antiq. 12:81 (12.2.10) and this was the construction of the two cisterns of gold, each containing two firkins:—but those which were of silver were much more bright and splendid than looking glasses; and you might in them see images that fell upon them more plainly than in the other.

Antiq. 12:82 (12.2.10) The king also ordered thirty vials; those of which the parts that were of gold, and filled up with precious stones, were shadowed over with the leaves of ivy and vines, artificially engraven;

Antiq. 12:83 (12.2.10) and these were the vessels that were, after an extraordinary manner, brought to this perfection, partly by the skill of the workmen, who were admirable in such fine work, but much more by the diligence and generosity of the king,

Antiq. 12:84 (12.2.10) who not only supplied the artificers abundantly, and with great generosity, with what they wanted, but he forbade public audiences for the time, and came and stood by the workmen, and saw the whole operation; and this was the cause why the workmen were so accurate in their performance, because they had regard to the king, and to his great concern about the vessels, and so the more indefatigably kept close to the work.

Antiq. 12:85 ¶ (12.2.11) And these were what gifts were sent by Ptolemy to Jerusalem, and dedicated to God there. But when Eleazar the high priest had devoted them to God, and had paid due respect to those that brought them, and had given them presents to be carried to the king, he dismissed them.

Antiq. 12:86 (12.2.11) And when they were come to Alexandria, and Ptolemy heard that they were come, and that the seventy elders were come also, he presently sent for Andreas and Aristeus, his ambassadors, who came to him, and delivered him the epistle which they brought him from the high priest, and made answer to all the questions he put to them by word of mouth.

Antiq. 12:87 (12.2.11) He then made haste to meet the elders that came from Jerusalem for the interpretation of the laws; and he gave command, that everybody who came on other occasions would be sent away, which was a thing surprising, and what he did not use to do;

Antiq. 12:88 (12.2.11) for those that were drawn thither upon such occasions used to come to him on the fifth day, but ambassadors at the month's end. But when he had sent those away, he waited for these that were sent by Eleazar;

Antiq. 12:89 (12.2.11) but as the old men came in with presents, which the high priest had given them to bring to the king and with the membranes, upon which they had their laws written in golden letters,<sup>5</sup> he put questions to them concerning those books;

Antiq. 12:90 (12.2.11) and when they had taken off the covers wherein they were wrapt up, they showed him the membranes. So the king stood admiring the thinness of those membranes, and the exactness of the junctures, which could not be perceived (so exactly were they connected one with another); and this he did for a considerable time. He then said that he returned them thanks for coming to him, and still greater



thanks to him that sent them; and, above all, to that God whose laws they appeared to be.

Antiq. 12:91 (12.2.11) Then did the elders, and those that were present with them, cry out with one voice, and wished all happiness to the king. Upon which he fell into tears by the violence of the pleasure he had, it being natural to men to afford the same indications in great joy that they do under sorrow.

Antiq. 12:92 (12.2.11) And when he had bidden them deliver the books to those that were appointed to receive them, he saluted the men, and said that it was but just to discourse, in the first place, of the errand they were sent about, and then to address himself to themselves. He promised, however, that he would make this day on which they came to him remarkable and eminent every year through the whole course of his life;

Antiq. 12:93 (12.2.11) for their coming to him, and the victory which he gained over Antigonus by sea, proved to be on the very same day. He also gave orders that they should sup with him; and gave it in charge that they should have excellent lodgings provided for them in the upper part of the city.

Antiq. 12:94 ¶ (12.2.12) Now he that was appointed to take care of the reception of strangers, Nicanor by name, called for Dorotheus, whose duty it was to make provision for them, and bade him prepare for every one of them what should be requisite for their diet and way of living: which thing was ordered by the king after this manner;

Antiq. 12:95 (12.2.12) he took care that those that belonged to every city, which did not use the same way of living, that all things should be prepared for them according to the custom of those that came to him, that, being feasted according to the usual method of their own way of living, they might be the better pleased, and might not be uneasy at anything done to them from which they were naturally averse. And this was now done in the case of these men by Dorotheus, who was put into this office because of his great skill in such matters belonging to common life:

Antiq. 12:96 (12.2.12) for he took care of all such matters as concerned the reception of strangers, and appointed them double seats for them to sit on, according as the king had commanded him to do; for he had commanded that half of their seats should be set at his right hand, and the other half behind his table, and took care that no respect should be omitted that could be shown them.

Antiq. 12:97 (12.2.12) And when they were thus set down, he bid Dorotheus to minister to all those that were come to him from Judea, after the manner they used to be ministered to: for which cause he sent away their sacred heralds, and those that slew the sacrifices, and the rest that used to say grace: but called to one of those that were come to him, whose name was Eleazar, who was a priest, and desired him to say grace:<sup>6</sup>

Antiq. 12:98 (12.2.12) who then stood in the midst of them, and prayed, that all prosperity might attend the king, and those that were his subjects. Upon which an acclamation was made by the whole company, with joy and a great noise; and when that was over, they fell to eating their supper, and to the enjoyment of what was set before them.

Antiq. 12:99 (12.2.12) And at a little interval afterward, when the king thought a sufficient time had been interposed, he began to talk philosophically to them, and he

asked every one of them a philosophical question,<sup>7</sup> and such a one as might give light in those inquiries; and when they had explained all the problems that had been proposed by the king about every point, he was well pleased with their answers. This took up the twelve days in which they were treated;

Antiq. 12:100 (12.2.12) and he that pleases may learn the particular questions in that book of Aristeus, which he wrote on this very occasion.

Antiq. 12:101 ¶ (12.2.13) And while not the king only, but the philosopher Menedemus also, admired them, and said, that all things were governed by Providence, and that it was probable that thence it was that such force or beauty was discovered in these men's words,—they then left off asking any more questions.

Antiq. 12:102 (12.2.13) But the king said that he had gained very great advantages by their coming, for that he had received this profit from them, that he had learned how he ought to rule his subjects. And he gave order that they should have every one three talents given them; and that those that were to conduct them to their lodging should do it.

Antiq. 12:103 (12.2.13) Accordingly, when three days were over Demetrius took them, and went over the causeway seven furlongs long: it was a bank in the sea to an island. And when they had gone over the bridge, he proceeded to the northern parts, and showed them where they should meet, which was in a house that was built near the shore, and was a quiet place, and fit for their discoursing together about their work.

Antiq. 12:104 (12.2.13) When he had brought them thither, he entreated them (now they had all things about them which they wanted for the interpretation of their law), that they would suffer nothing to interrupt them in their work. Accordingly, they made an accurate interpretation, with great zeal and great pains; and this they continued to do till the ninth hour of the day;

Antiq. 12:105 (12.2.13) after which time they relaxed and took care of their body, while their food was provided for them in great plenty: besides, Dorotheus, at the king's command, brought them a great deal of what was provided for the king himself.

Antiq. 12:106 (12.2.13) But in the morning they came to the court, and saluted Ptolemy, and then went away to their former place, where, when they had washed their hands,<sup>8</sup> and purified themselves, they betook themselves to the interpretation of the laws.

Antiq. 12:107 (12.2.13) Now when the law was transcribed, and the labor of interpretation was over, which came to its conclusion in seventy-two days, Demetrius gathered all the Jews together to the place where the laws were translated, and where the interpreters were, and read them over.

Antiq. 12:108 (12.2.13) The multitude did also approve of those elders that were the interpreters of the law. They withal commended Demetrius for his proposal, as the inventor of what was greatly for their happiness; and they desired that he would give leave to their rulers also to read the law. Moreover they all, both the priests and the ancientest of the elders, and the principal men of their commonwealth, made it their request, that since the interpretation was happily finished, it might continue in the state it now was, and might not be altered.

Antiq. 12:109 (12.2.13) And when they all commended that determination of theirs, they enjoined, that if anyone observed either anything superfluous, or anything

omitted, that he would take a view of it again, and have it laid before them, and corrected; which was a wise action of theirs, that when the thing was judged to have been well done, it might continue forever.

Antiq. 12:110 ¶ (12.2.14) So the king rejoiced when he saw that his design of this nature was brought to perfection, to so great advantage: and he was chiefly delighted with hearing the laws read to him; and was astonished at the deep meaning and wisdom of the legislator. And he began to discourse with Demetrius, “How it came to pass that, when this legislation was so wonderful, no one, either of the poets or of the historians had made mention of it.”

Antiq. 12:111 (12.2.14) Demetrius made answer, “that no one durst be so bold as to touch upon the description of these laws, because they were divine and venerable, and because some that had attempted it were afflicted by God.”—

Antiq. 12:112 (12.2.14) He also told him, that “Theopompus was desirous of writing somewhat about them, but was thereupon disturbed in his mind for above thirty days’ time; and upon some intermission of his distemper, he appeased God [by prayer], as suspecting that his madness proceeded from that cause.” Nay, indeed he further saw in a dream, that his distemper befell him while he indulged too great a curiosity about divine matters, and was desirous of publishing them among common men; but when he left off that attempt he recovered his understanding again.

Antiq. 12:113 (12.2.14) Moreover, he informed him of Theodectes, the tragic poet, concerning whom it was reported, that when in a certain dramatic representation, he was desirous to make mention of things that were contained in the sacred books, he was afflicted with a darkness in his eyes; and that upon his being conscious of the occasion of his distemper, and appeasing God (by prayer), he was freed from that affliction.

Antiq. 12:114 ¶ (12.2.15) And when the king had received these books from Demetrius, as we have said already, he adored them; and gave order, that great care should be taken of them, that they might remain uncorrupted. He also desired that the interpreters would come often to him out of Judea,

Antiq. 12:115 (12.2.15) and that both on account of the respects that he would pay them, and on account of the presents he would make them; for he said, it was now but just to send them away, although if, of their own accord, they would come to him hereafter, they should obtain all that their own wisdom might justly require, and what his generosity was able to give them.

Antiq. 12:116 (12.2.15) So he sent them away, and gave to every one of them three garments of the best sort, and two talents of gold, and a cup of the value of one talent, and the furniture of the room wherein they were feasted. And these were the things he presented to them.

Antiq. 12:117 (12.2.15) But by them he sent to Eleazar the high priest ten beds, with feet of silver, and the furniture to them belonging, and a cup of the value of thirty talents; and besides these, ten garments, and purple, and a very beautiful crown, and a hundred pieces of the finest woven linen; and also vials and dishes, and vessels for pouring, and two golden cisterns, to be dedicated to God.

Antiq. 12:118 (12.2.15) He also desired him, by an epistle, that he would give these interpreters leave, if any of them were desirous, of coming to him; because he highly valued a conversation with men of such learning, and should be very willing to lay out

his wealth upon such men. And this was what came to the Jews, and was much to their glory and honor, from Ptolemy Philadelphus.

#### **Philo of Alexandria, Life of Moses 2:25-44**

Moses 2:25 ¶ And that beauty and dignity of the legislation of Moses is honoured not among the Jews only, but also by all other nations, is plain, both from what has been already said and from what I am about to state.

Moses 2:26 In olden time the laws were written in the Chaldaean language, and for a long time they remained in the same condition as at first, not changing their language as long as their beauty had not made them known to other nations;

Moses 2:27 but when, from the daily and uninterrupted respect shown to them by those to whom they had been given, and from their ceaseless observance of their ordinances, other nations also obtained an understanding of them, their reputation spread over all lands; for what was really good, even though it may through envy be overshadowed for a short time, still in time shines again through the intrinsic excellence of its nature.

Some persons, thinking it a scandalous thing that these laws should only be known among one half portion of the human race, namely, among the barbarians, and that the Greek nation should be wholly and entirely ignorant of them, turned their attention to their translation.

Moses 2:28 ¶ And since this undertaking was an important one, tending to the general advantage, not only of private persons, but also of rulers, of whom the number was not great, it was entrusted to kings and to the most illustrious of all kings.

Moses 2:29 Ptolemy, surnamed Philadelphus, was the third in succession after Alexander, the monarch who subdued Egypt; and he was, in all virtues which can be displayed in government, the most excellent sovereign, not only of all those of his time, but of all that ever lived; so that even now, after the lapse of so many generations, his fame is still celebrated, as having left many instances and monuments of his magnanimity in the cities and districts of his kingdom, so that even now it is come to be a sort of proverbial expression to call excessive magnificence, and zeal, for honour and splendour in preparation, Philadelphian, from his name;

Moses 2:30 and, in a word, the whole family of the Ptolemies was exceedingly eminent and conspicuous above all other royal families, and among the Ptolemies, Philadelphus was the most illustrious; for all the rest put together scarcely did as many glorious and praiseworthy actions as this one king did by himself, being, as it were, the leader of the herd, and in a manner the head of all the kings.

Moses 2:31 ¶ He, then, being a sovereign of this character, and having conceived a great admiration for and love of the legislation of Moses, conceived the idea of having our laws translated into the Greek language; and immediately he sent out ambassadors to the high-priest and king of Judea, for they were the same person.

Moses 2:32 And having explained his wishes, and having requested him to pick him out a number of men, of perfect fitness for the task, who should translate the law, the high-priest, as was natural, being greatly pleased, and thinking that the king had only felt the inclination to undertake a work of such a character from having been

influenced by the providence of God, considered, and with great care selected the most respectable of the Hebrews whom he had about him, who in addition to their knowledge of their national scriptures, had also been well instructed in Grecian literature, and cheerfully sent them.

Moses 2:33 ¶ And when they arrived at the king's court they were hospitably received by the king; and while they feasted, they in return feasted their entertainer with witty and virtuous conversation; for he made experiment of the wisdom of each individual among them, putting to them a succession of new and extraordinary questions; and they, since the time did not allow of their being prolix in their answers, replied with great propriety and fidelity as if they were delivering apophthegms which they had already prepared.

Moses 2:34 So when they had won his approval, they immediately began to fulfil the objects for which that honourable embassy had been sent; and considering among themselves how important the affair was, to translate laws which had been divinely given by direct inspiration, since they were not able either to take away anything, or to add anything, or to alter anything, but were bound to preserve the original form and character of the whole composition, they looked out for the most completely purified place of all the spots on the outside of the city.

For the places within the walls, as being filled with all kinds of animals, were held in suspicion by them by reason of the diseases and deaths of some, and the accursed actions of those who were in health.

Moses 2:35 The island of Pharos lies in front of Alexandria, the neck of which runs out like a sort of tongue towards the city, being surrounded with water of no great depth, but chiefly with shoals and shallow water, so that the great noise and roaring from the beating of the waves is kept at a considerable distance, and so mitigated.

Moses 2:36 They judged this place to be the most suitable of all the spots in the neighbourhood for them to enjoy quiet and tranquillity in, so that they might associate with the laws alone in their minds; and there they remained, and having taken the sacred scriptures, they lifted up them and their hands also to heaven, entreating of God that they might not fail in their object. And he assented to their prayers, that the greater part, or indeed the universal race of mankind might be benefited, by using these philosophical and entirely beautiful commandments for the correction of their lives.

Moses 2:37 ¶ Therefore, being settled in a secret place, and nothing even being present with them except the elements of nature, the earth, the water, the air, and the heaven, concerning the creation of which they were going in the first place to explain the sacred account; for the account of the creation of the world is the beginning of the law; they, like men inspired, prophesied, not one saying one thing and another another, but every one of them employed the self-same nouns and verbs, as if some unseen prompter had suggested all their language to them.

Moses 2:38 And yet who is there who does not know that every language, and the Greek language above all others, is rich in a variety of words, and that it is possible to vary a sentence and to paraphrase the same idea, so as to set it forth in a great variety of manners, adapting many different forms of expression to it at different times.

But this, they say, did not happen at all in the case of this translation of the law, but that, in every case, exactly corresponding Greek words were employed to translate

literally the appropriate Chaldaic words, being adapted with exceeding propriety to the matters which were to be explained;

Moses 2:39 for just as I suppose the things which are proved in geometry and logic do not admit any variety of explanation, but the proposition which was set forth from the beginning remains unaltered, in like manner I conceive did these men find words precisely and literally corresponding to the things, which words were alone, or in the greatest possible degree, destined to explain with clearness and force the matters which it was desired to reveal.

Moses 2:40 And there is a very evident proof of this; for if Chaldaeans were to learn the Greek language, and if Greeks were to learn Chaldaean, and if each were to meet with those scriptures in both languages, namely, the Chaldaic and the translated version, they would admire and reverence them both as sisters, or rather as one and the same both in their facts and in their language; considering these translators not mere interpreters but hierophants and prophets to whom it had been granted it their honest and guileless minds to go along with the most pure spirit of Moses.

Moses 2:41 ¶ On which account, even to this very day, there is every year a solemn assembly held and a festival celebrated in the island of Pharos, to which not only the Jews but a great number of persons of other nations sail across, reverencing the place in which the first light of interpretation shone forth, and thanking God for that ancient piece of beneficence which was always young and fresh.

Moses 2:42 ¶ And after the prayers and the giving of thanks some of them pitched their tents on the shore, and some of them lay down without any tents in the open air on the sand of the shore, and feasted with their relations and friends, thinking the shore at that time a more beautiful abode than the furniture of the king's palace.

Moses 2:43 ¶ In this way those admirable, and incomparable, and most desirable laws were made known to all people, whether private individuals or kings, and this too at a period when the nation had not been prosperous for a long time. And it is generally the case that a cloud is thrown over the affairs of those who are not flourishing, so that but little is known of them;

Moses 2:44 and then, if they make any fresh start and begin to improve, how great is the increase of their renown and glory? I think that in that case every nation, abandoning all their own individual customs, and utterly disregarding their national laws, would change and come over to the honour of such a people only; for their laws shining in connection with, and simultaneously with, the prosperity of the nation, will obscure all others, just as the rising sun obscures the stars.