The Accusation of Misanthropy against the Jews in Antiquity: A Stoic Background?

Katell Berthelot

CNRS / Aix-Marseille University

katell.berthelot@univ-amu.fr

Abstract:

Outbursts of anti-Judaism in Antiquity, such as the pogrom of 38 CE, have often been studied from a political point of view. The disaster that befell the Jewish community in Alexandria was thus shown to be connected to the citizenship issue in this city and, more widely, to the political evolution in Roman Egypt that led to changes of status for Jews (in comparison to the Hellenistic period).

Yet when we look at the writings of the ancient authors who accused the Jews of misanthropy, such as Apion, we realize that the political circumstances that Jews experienced at that time are unlikely to be the only factor in the development of this accusation. The intellectual background of each author may have played a role as well. In several cases, this background appears to have been Stoic or to have reflected a kind of universalistic ethics and worldview. This article looks at the examples of Posidonius, Apion, and Euphrates to illustrate this dynamic.

Keywords: misanthropy, Stoicism, Posidonius, Strabo, Diodorus, Apion, Euphrates

Introduction

Outbursts of Jew-hatred in Antiquity have naturally been studied from a political point of view. In the case of the anti-Jewish riots of 38 CE, for example, scholars analyzed the disaster that befell the Jewish community in Alexandria in connection with the citizenship issue in this city and, more widely, in the context of the political evolution of Roman Egypt. This evolution led to a significant change in the Jews’ status from that which had been established earlier, in the Hellenistic period.[[1]](#footnote-1)

According to the available evidence, physical attacks against Jewish communities were rare in Antiquity, whereas anti-Jewish prejudice is relatively abundant in Greek and Roman sources. (which, however, are not systematic hostile to Jews.[[2]](#footnote-2)) The most specific accusation directed at Jews was certainly the accusation of misanthropy (*apanthrōpia* or *misanthrōpia* in Greek), occasionally combined with that of *misoxenia* (inhospitality or hostility toward foreigners, depending on the context) or *amixia* (unsociable behavior).[[3]](#footnote-3) Misanthropic characters are found in Greek texts from at least the fifth century BCE onward, often in comedies.[[4]](#footnote-4) It is important to highlight that these misanthropes are always Greek citizens, not savage barbarians. The fact that the Jews, their way of life, and their customs were characterized as misanthropic is surprising, as misanthropy was generally a characteristic attributed to individuals, not to a collective. Moreover, Jews were the only people in Antiquity labeled in this way (other peoples, such as the Egyptians, might be depicted as hostile to strangers, or even accused of killing them in some cases, yet they were not described as “misanthropes”). In addition, apart from two Jewish texts,[[5]](#footnote-5) the word *misoxenos* is found only twice in Greek literature, in both cases in connection with the Jews.[[6]](#footnote-6) As to the notion of *amixia*, it is found both under the pen of Philostratus and in Josephus’s writings concerning foreign (and hostile) perceptions of Jews.[[7]](#footnote-7)

When we read the ancient authors like Apion who accused the Jews of misanthropy it is evident that the Jews’ political circumstances were not the only factor in the background of this accusation. In the following, I will argue that the authors who made this claim shared an intellectual and ideological background and that this also contributed to the development of the trope that the Jews were misanthropic. As we will see, these authors were associated with Stoic thought or at least shared the Stoics’ universalistic ethics and worldview. This paper examines three Greek authors who characterized the Jews or the Jewish way of life as misanthropic: Posidonius of Apamea, Apion, and Euphrates. I will also discuss the cases of Strabo and Diodorus, two authors whose works are considered to contain numerous fragments of Posidonius’s writings and who played a role in conveying the notion that the Jewish laws were misanthropic. My enquiry will not be limited to passages that use the word *misanthrōpia* or related terms and will discuss a variety of expressions of the idea that the Jews refuse to mix with non-Jews and are hostile to them.

1. Posidonius of Apamea

The Stoic philosopher Posidonius, originally from Apamea in Syria, was a student of Panaetius, the head of the Stoa until 110 BCE. He was a great traveler and a polymath who wrote treatises on astronomy, mathematics, history, and geography in addition to philosophical works sensu stricto.[[8]](#footnote-8) He established a school in Rhodes that flourished during the first half of the first century BCE and attracted prestigious visitors such as Cicero (in 78–77 BCE) and Pompey (in 67 and 62 BCE).[[9]](#footnote-9) Posidonius was a man of great renown, who was appointed as *prytanis* of Rhodes and sent as an ambassador to Rome in the winter of 87/86 BCE, maybe together with Apollonius Molon. He later returned to Rome and died there ca. 51 BCE.[[10]](#footnote-10) Posidonius may have met Jews in Apamea, where he was born and grew up, in Rhodes, or in Rome.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The texts that have been attributed to Posidonius that relate to Jews are found in Strabo (*Geography* 16.2.34–46) and in Diodorus (34–35.1.1–5), respectively.[[12]](#footnote-12) Both authors are known for having used Posidonius’s *Histories*, which apparently dealt at length with the decline of the Seleucid kingdom.[[13]](#footnote-13) It seems that Posidonius composed an ethnographic excursus on the Jews in the framework of his account of Antiochus VII Sidetes’s siege of Jerusalem, which occurred at the beginning of John Hyrcanus’s high priesthood.[[14]](#footnote-14) Moreover, according to Josephus (*C. Ap.* 2.79), Posidonius’s work was one of the sources used by the Alexandrian rhetor Apion, a notorious antisemite. This information may not be reliable, and it is very difficult to identify elements in Apion’s discourse that go back to Posidonius’s writings, but this passage reveals that it was not absurd for Apion to cite Posidonius as an authority on the Jews. Apion’s reference to Posidonius suggests that the latter was critical of Jews or Judaism, even though we cannot establish what his criticism consisted in based on Josephus’s *Against Apion*.[[15]](#footnote-15) We must therefore turn to Strabo and Diodorus.

1.1 Strabo’s excursus on the Jews

The passage on the Jews in Strabo is located in his description of Syria (16.2) and is associated with a brief mention of Pompey’s siege of Jerusalem in 63 BCE.[[16]](#footnote-16) Strabo explicitly refers to Posidonius on several occasions in his description of Syria, at 16.2.4, 16.2.10, 16.2.17, 16.2.24, and 16.2.43. Posidonius is the only source that Strabo mentions in that section (which does not mean that he did not use other sources nor does it entail that he quoted Posidonius verbatim).

According to Strabo, Moses was an Egyptian priest who was displeased with the Egyptian and Greek ways of representing and worshipping God. He subsequently left Egypt for Judea, bringing with him others who shared his theological (or philosophical) views. He maintained that “God is the one thing alone that encompasses us all and encompasses land and sea—the thing which we call heaven, or universe, or the nature of all that exists” (§35).[[17]](#footnote-17) People should worship God without representing him through images, and expect blessings only if they lived a righteous life. Strabo further explains that Moses and his followers settled in the area of Jerusalem: “he easily took possession of the place, since it was not a place that would be looked on with envy, nor yet one for which anyone would make a serious fight,” because it was rocky and arid (§36). Moreover,

Moses, instead of using arms, put forward as defence his sacrifices and his Divine Being, being resolved to seek a seat of worship for Him and promising to deliver to the people a kind of worship and a kind of ritual which would not oppress those who adopted them either with expenses or with divine obsessions or with other absurd troubles (§36).

Moses’s project and reputation were so good that “the people all round, one and all, came over to him, because of his dealings with them and of the prospects he held out to them” (§36).

Strabo then states that after Moses passed away, his successors imitated his piety and justice for some time, until superstitious men rose to the priesthood. The development of superstition resulted in “abstinence from (certain types of) food” (or “meals”—αἱ τῶν βρωμάτων ἀποσχέσεις—probably in the sense of meals consisting of non-kosher food, i.e. meals shared with non-Jews),[[18]](#footnote-18) circumcision, excision (female genital mutilation) (*sic*), and “other observances of the kind” (§37). The text thus associates some fundamental Jewish practices such as *kashrut* and male circumcicion not with Moses but with his superstitious successors.

After the superstitious priests, tyrants seized power in Judea; at that time, bands of robbers made their appearance: “some revolted and harassed the country, both their own country and that of their neighbors, whereas others, co-operating with the rulers, seized the property of others and subdued much of Syria and Phoenicia” (§37). Scholars have generally associated this depiction with the Hasmonean period and the wars waged by the Hasmoneans against neighboring peoples.[[19]](#footnote-19)

The text explains that despite the tyranny imposed on the people, the latter continued to venerate their “acropolis,” a term that probably designates the Jerusalem temple. Then follows a digression on the general human tendency to venerate places in which the gods made their will known to mortals and to honor the prophets who communicated the gods’ messages, including Moses among these prophets (§§38–39). The digression ends with the remark that “Moses was such a person as these, as also his successors, who, with no bad beginning, turned out for the worse” (§39). The excursus subsequently returns to the Hasmoneans—it names Alexander Jannaeus and his sons explicitly—and describes Judea’s fate after Pompey’s conquest of the region. The Roman general is said to have “destroyed the haunts of robbers and the treasure-holds of the tyrants,” a phrase that unambiguously refers to the Hasmonean fortresses (§40).[[20]](#footnote-20) Strabo then proceeds to describe the area of the Dead Sea and its natural resources (§§41–45). It is in this context that he refers to Posidonius, in §43. Finally, in §46 Strabo mentions Herod’s appointment as king of Judea and the fate of his descendants, topics that Posidonius could not have written about (since he died in 51 BCE).

Bezalel Bar-Kochva has put forward several convincing arguments in favor of the attribution of §§35–37 to Posidonius (he considers the digression in §§38–39 to represent a different source).[[21]](#footnote-21) Ivor Ludlam reached the same conclusion in his study of the description of Israel’s God in Strabo’s text.[[22]](#footnote-22) This attribution of §§35–37 to Posidonius also appears in earlier scholarship, prompted by the explicit reference to Posidonius in Strabo’s description of the Dead Sea at 16.2.43.[[23]](#footnote-23) Some scholars have raised doubts about this attribution or disagree with it outright,[[24]](#footnote-24) partly in connection with a wider trend to question previous attributions of selected passages to Posidonius.[[25]](#footnote-25) One of the objections raised by these scholars is that Strabo’s praise of Moses contrasts with Josephus’s testimony in *Against Apion*, that Posidonius had a negative opinion of the Jewish cult. However, as mentioned above, we can only speculate as to the substance of the argument that Apion attributed to Posidonius. Moreover, Strabo’s account does convey criticism of contemporary Jewish practices, so the evidence from Josephus does not necessarily contradict Strabo’s testimony. Some scholars have also speculated that Strabo had a Jewish source.[[26]](#footnote-26) This is unlikely as Strabo’s depiction diverges from biblical traditions in numerous places; a Jewish author would not have included female genital mutilation among Jewish customs or depicted Judaism as originating in the views of an Egyptian priest.[[27]](#footnote-27)

All in all, the attribution of the source for §§35–37 to Posidonius remains a sound hypothesis and in the following discussion I will follow Bar-Kochva in treating it as such. The question then, is what was Posidonius’s attitude toward Jews and Judaism? Bar-Kochva argues that Posidonius depicted Mosaic Judaism as an ideal society and as a model that demonstrated that Posidonius’s vision of the Golden Age had existed in historical times and was “no mere pipe dream.”[[28]](#footnote-28) He admits that Posidonius condemned “later Judaism and the Jewish leaders of his time” (the Hasmonean dynasty) and “would not have intended to promote the Jewish religion and customs,” yet surprisingly concludes: “Despite all that has been said so far, it may be supposed that Posidonius would not have chosen the Jews to illustrate the practicability of his Stoic ideal state if his own attitude toward Judaism and the Jews had not been basically favorable.”[[29]](#footnote-29) Bar-Kochva’s conclusion is difficult given that it was not “the Jews” who Posidonius chose as a model, but Moses and the project that Posidonius attributed to him, which did not have many Jewish traits. Particularly, the Posidonian notion of the divine is more Stoic than Jewish, despite some common features. Bar-Kochva’s illogical conclusion results from his attributing to Posidonius a passage of Josephus’*Antiquities* in which Antiochus VII is said to praise the Jews’ *eusebeia* (piety/religious conduct), which Bar-Kochva takes to reflect Posidonius’s views.[[30]](#footnote-30) However, the comment on the Jews’ *eusebeia* is not found in the other accounts of Jerusalem’s siege and is clearly an apologetic addition by Josephus that contradicts Strabo’s testimony and can in no way be attributed to Posidonius. It is understandable that Josephus, who used a source that depicted Antiochus VII as pious (elsewhere Josephus characterized Antiochus as dishonest and guilty of “lawless conduct” (*paranomia*) [*A.J.* 13.225–226]), felt the need to put in the king’s mouth a recognition of the Jews’ own *eusebeia*. This is a recurring theme in Josephus’s work.

Going back to Strabo’s excursus, it must be emphasized that apart from the references to Moses and Jerusalem/Judea and the notion of a cult without images, nothing makes the ideal society described in §§35–36 specifically Jewish. In other words, while the Jewish rejection of divine images and anthropomorphism—a well-known feature of the Jews in the Greco-Roman world—certainly played a role in Posidonius’s choice of Moses as the founder of the ideal society that he wanted to depict, this society is otherwise devoid of specifically Jewish characteristics.

Moreover, Strabo’s text reflects a sharp opposition between Mosaic “Judaism” and the Judaism of Posidonius’s time, not simply between the Mosaic project and the behavior of the Hasmoneans.[[31]](#footnote-31) Posidonius’s account of Judaism in the Hasmonean period looks in many ways like an inverted picture of the system he attributes to Moses. Moses refuses the use of arms and military force altogether, whereas the tyrants (i.e., the Hasmoneans) and the robbers engage in continuous warfare. Moses carefully chooses the place where the group will settle to avoid all kinds of territorial conflicts with the surrounding peoples; in contrast, the rule of the tyrants is characterized by armed robbery and raids both within Judea and in neighboring countries, and these bands of robbers are used by the tyrants to conquer and subdue “much of Syria and Phoenicia” (§37).[[32]](#footnote-32) The portrayal of the Hasmonean period is thus a complete inversion of Strabo’s account of Moses’s peaceful vision that did not involve the conquest of any inhabited territory and precluded the use of arms. If David Hahm is right in arguing that there is a correspondence between the behavior of the leaders and that of their people in Posidonius’s thought, the implication is that Jews in general (at least in Judea) were hostile toward their non-Jewish neighbors.[[33]](#footnote-33)

Another crucial opposition between the Mosaic project and the Judaism of the Hasmonean period in Strabo’s text concerns the fact that the cult established by Moses was devoid of “absurd activities” (*pragmateiai atopoi*, §36); in contrast, the Judaism of Posidonius’s time is characterized by “superstition” (*deisidaimonia*, §37), which is the contrary of true piety and involves nonsensical rituals. This trend goes back not to the tyrants, but to those who preceded them in the priestly office: “afterwards (ἔπειτ᾿), in the first place (πρῶτον), superstitious men were appointed to the priesthood, and then (ἔπειτα) tyrannical people” (§37). From the author’s perspective, this infelicitous development endured until his time, as is apparent in the phrase “from superstition arose abstinence from (certain types of) food, from which it is their custom to abstain *even today* (καὶ νῦν)” (§37). “Abstinence from (certain types of) food” is the result of *deisidaimonia*, reflecting Posidonius’s negative perception of the Jewish dietary laws. Again, it must be emphasized that rituals like circumcision and the dietary laws are central aspects of Judaism. The text is critical of key Jewish practices, not merely the Hasmonean wars.

Does Strabo’s account portray the Jews as misanthropic? Bar-Kochva argues that Posidonius understood Moses’s choice of a desolate area as reflecting a desire to remain isolated from the rest of humankind in order to develop a new type of society and to offer the deity an authentic form of worship. He concludes that Posidonius praised Jewish “self-isolation.”[[34]](#footnote-34) This reading, unfortunately, does not convey the meaning of the text appropriately. The text indicates that Moses’s choice of a place that was rocky, arid, and barren was motivated by his desire to avoid territorial conflicts with the neighboring populations, and thus to prevent war (§36: “it was not a place that would be looked on with envy, nor yet one for which anyone would make a serious fight”). Moses’s refusal to engage in warlike activities also comes to the fore in the statement that “Moses, instead of using arms, put forward as defence his sacrifices and his Divine Being” (§36). That the issue was not to remain isolated from the rest of humankind is clear from the end of §36, which states: “the peoples all round, one and all, came over to him, because of his dealings with them and of the prospects he held out to them.” Moses appears as a wise and pious leader who was completely open to sharing his wisdom with other groups of people, and his behavior can be characterized as exhibiting *philanthrōpia*.[[35]](#footnote-35) To say that the text ascribes to Moses a desire for seclusion is simply wrong. It also does not depict Moses as attempting to protect his group from corrupting foreign influences. That Posidonius did not explain the contrast between an ideal society under Moses and a violent and corrupt one under later rulers by the influence of foreign elements coheres with his general explanation of civilizations’ decline: he regarded civilizational decline as largely due to internal degeneration rather than external factors.[[36]](#footnote-36)

Two of the Jewish practices that are depicted as negative products of superstition, the dietary laws and circumcision, are associated with misanthropy in other texts written by Greek and Roman authors. In Diodorus’s account of Antiochus VII’s siege of Jerusalem, to which we will turn below, the dietary laws are closely connected to the accusation of misanthropy; later on, in Juvenal’s *Satires*, abstinence from pork is mentioned among the customs that lead to adopting the misanthropic Jewish way of life.[[37]](#footnote-37) Posidonius himself merely describes the dietary laws as superstitious but it is possible that his negative attitude was influenced by a perception of them as anti-social. It is clear from other passages attributed to him that he valued sociability and *koinōnia* highly.[[38]](#footnote-38) As to circumcision, Tacitus interpreted it as evidence of misanthropy, as a way for Jews to distinguish the members of their group from the rest of humankind, whom they abhor. Even though Juvenal and Tacitus are of course from a much later period than Posidonius, their testimonies shed light on the possible connotations of abstinence from certain foods and of circumcision in a Greco-Roman context.[[39]](#footnote-39)

In short, in the Strabo/Posidonius account, Moses’s vision is admirable but also stands in radical opposition to the Judaism of Posidonius’s time, which Posidonius viewed as a degenerated version of the Mosaic project, and depicted as superstitious and hostile toward the Jews’ neighbors. In particular, Posidonius was critical of the Jewish dietary laws, which were associated with misanthropy in other ancient texts dealing with the Jews, including another one associated with Posidonius himself, to which we shall now turn.

1.2 Diodorus’s account of Antiochus VII’s siege of Jerusalem

A passage originally found in books 34–35 of Diodorus’s work, which was transmitted as an excerpt by the Christian patriarch Photius (9th century CE), relates to Antiochus VII Sidetes’s siege of Jerusalem and recalls the conflict between Antiochus IV and the Jews during the Maccabean crisis.[[40]](#footnote-40) Posidonius is not mentioned in this passage, but Diodorus refers to him elsewhere in his work. The text runs as follows:

1. When King Antiochus, says Diodorus, was laying siege to Jerusalem, the Jews held out for a time, but when all their supplies were exhausted they found themselves compelled to make overtures for a cessation of hostilities. Now the majority of his friends advised the king to take the city by storm and to wipe out completely the race of Jews, since they alone of all nations avoided dealings with any other people and looked upon all men as their enemies (μόνους γὰρ ἁπάντων ἐθνῶν ἀκοινωνήτους εἶναι τῆς πρὸς ἄλλο ἔθνος ἐπιμιξίας καὶ πολεμίους ὑπολαμβάνειν πάντας). They pointed out, too, that the ancestors of the Jews had been driven out of all Egypt as men who were impious and detested by the gods (ἀσεβεῖς καὶ μισουμένους ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν). For by way of purging the country, all persons who had white or leprous marks on their bodies had been assembled and driven across the border, as being under a curse; the refugees had occupied the territory round about Jerusalem, and having organized the nation of the Jews had made their hatred of mankind (τὸ μῖσος τὸ πρὸς τοὺς ἀνθρώπους) into a tradition, and on this account had introduced utterly outlandish laws: not to break bread with any other race, nor to show them any good will at all (τὸ μηδενὶ ἄλλῳ ἔθνει τραπέζης κοινωνεῖν μηδ᾿ εὐνοεῖν τὸ παράπαν). His friends reminded Antiochus also of the enmity that in times past his ancestors had felt for this people. Antiochus, called Epiphanes, on defeating the Jews had entered the innermost sanctuary of the god’s temple, where it was lawful for the priest alone to enter. Finding there a marble statue of a heavily bearded man seated on an ass, with a book in his hands, he supposed it to be an image of Moses, the founder of Jerusalem and organizer of the nation, the man, moreover, who had ordained for the Jews their misanthropic and lawless customs (τὰ μισάνθρωπα καὶ παράνομα ἔθη). And since Epiphanes was shocked by such hatred directed against all mankind (τὴν μισανθρωπίαν πάντων ἐθνῶν), he had set himself to break down their traditional practices. Accordingly, he sacrificed before the image of the founder and the open-air altar of the god a great sow, and poured its blood over them. Then, having prepared its flesh, he ordered that their holy books, containing the xenophobic laws (τὰ μισόξενα νόμιμα), should be sprinkled with the broth of the meat; that the lamp, which they call undying and which burns continually in the temple, should be extinguished; and that the high priest and the rest of the Jews should be compelled to partake of the meat.

Rehearsing all these events, his friends strongly urged Antiochus to make an end of the race completely, or, failing that, to abolish their laws and force them to change their ways. But the king, being a magnanimous and mild-mannered person (μεγαλόψυχος ὢν καὶ τὸ ἦθος ἥμερος), took hostages but exonerated the Jews from the charges (raised against them), once he had exacted the tribute that was due and had dismantled the walls of Jerusalem.[[41]](#footnote-41)

Most scholars agree that this text should be attributed to Posidonius.[[42]](#footnote-42) Bar-Kokhva is representative of this near-consensus when he writes that:

A comparison with certain surviving Posidonian fragments proves that Diodorus drew on Posidonius’s *Histories* from book 33 of his *Historical Library* to book 37, covering the period from 146 to 86 B.C.E., and it has long been established that Diodorus was in the habit of adhering to just one source, in one or more books or on one subject (the “Einzelquelleprinzip”).[[43]](#footnote-43)

Several scholars have challenged this attitude to Diodorus’s use of his sources, and argue that Diodorus used different sources simultaneously and should be seen as an author in his own right, who freely reworked his sources and modified their wording.[[44]](#footnote-44) If they are correct, then in some cases, the wording may be from Diodorus rather than Posidonius. We also cannot exclude the possibility that Diodorus used another source in addition to Posidonius. Bar-Kochva plausibly argues that Posidonius, who himself certainly used sources to compose his *Histories*, must have depended on the work of Timochares, a court historian who wrote a whole book on Antiochus VII.[[45]](#footnote-45) Whether Diodorus could have used Timochares directly, without the mediation of Posidonius, is an open question.

In any case, while the story told by Diodorus may well go back to Posidonius’s *Histories*, it does not entail that the Stoic philosopher shared the ideas of the king’s counselors. There are some discrepancies between the latter’s discourse and the passage attributed to Posidonius in Strabo that we examined previously. In Diodorus’s text, Antiochus IV considers Moses to be responsible for the Jews’ misanthropic laws (this association is also found in the other passage on the Jews in Diodorus’s *Historical Library* [40.3­], attributed to Hecataeus). In contrast, the excursus on the Jews in Strabo’s *Geography* attributes the dietary laws that are characterized by Diodorus as misanthropic to the superstitious priests who arose after Moses and his first followers. The arguments of Antiochus VII’s counselors probably reflect some Greek perceptions of the Jews in the Hasmonean period, but should not be confused with the views of Posidonius himself.

That the author of the text did not necessarily share the views of the counselors comes to the fore also in his comments on Antiochus VII’s reaction. The king is said to have rejected his counselors’ advice to annihilate the Jews. Whether or not the king shared their perception of the Jews as a misanthropic people, he did not feel the need to take harsh measures against the Jews beyond exacting tribute and destroying the city’s walls.[[46]](#footnote-46) The author of the text clearly approves of the king’s decision. However, if he had considered the accusations against the Jews to be completely false, he would probably have described the king as wise and just rather than “magnanimous” (*megalopsychos*) and “mild-mannered” (*to ēthos hēmeros*) (§5). Bar-Kochva tries to argue that in this passage, *megalopsychos* should be understood as meaning “fair,” “aspiring to truth and justice,” with the implication that the author considered the accusations against the Jews completely false. However, he cannot provide any example of a passage attributed to Posidonius elsewhere in Diodorus where this term has that meaning.[[47]](#footnote-47) Moreover, it makes little sense to imagine that Posidonius would have referred at such length to the counselors’ arguments if from his perspective they were utterly wrong. A comparison with another text attributed to Posidonius, in Plutarch’s *Life of Pompey*, may shed light on this point. When Pompey spares the lives of the pirates who had surrendered to him and offers them the choice of establishing themselves as farmers or dwelling in cities, he is described as dealing with them with moderation and humaneness precisely because these pirates were dangerous and harmful.[[48]](#footnote-48)

Based on Diodorus’s passage alone, it remains difficult to determine whether Posidonius saw the Jewish way of life as misanthropic or not. It nevertheless must be noted that the sentence “they alone of all nations avoided dealings with any other people and looked upon all men as their enemies (μόνους γὰρ ἁπάντων ἐθνῶν ἀκοινωνήτους εἶναι τῆς πρὸς ἄλλο ἔθνος ἐπιμιξίας καὶ πολεμίους ὑπολαμβάνειν πάντας)” recalls two negative depictions of the Jews in Strabo’s account, namely the dietary laws (which prevent sociability with non-Jews) and the wars waged by the Hasmoneans and their followers. In Strabo’s account, the association between the Jewish dietary laws and misanthropy is at best implicit, whereas in Diodorus they are clearly associated, especially in the description of the “utterly outlandish laws: not to break bread with any other race, nor to show them any good will at all” (§1). Despite these differences, Strabo/Posidonius’s description of the Judaism of his time fits with some of the elements found in the counselors’ discourse in Diodorus.

All in all, it is striking that two passages that many scholars associate with Posidonius, found in the works of two different authors, sharply criticize Jewish practices—especially those that establish distinction and separation between Jews and non-Jews—and characterize the Jews’ attitude toward non-Jews as hostile. Even though we cannot attribute the use of the terms *misanthrōpia*/*misanthrōpos* with certainty to Posidonius, it is nevertheless likely that Posidonius considered the Jewish laws and practices *of his time* to be misanthropic.

1.3 The connections of Strabo and Diodorus to Stoicism

Beyond their use of sources, Strabo and Diodorus are ultimately responsible for producing texts that deliberately present the Jewish laws as superstitious or misanthropic. So whether one doubts the attribution to Posidonius of the excerpts quoted above or simply wishes to emphasize the responsibility of Strabo and Diodorus for the content and phrasing of their respective works, it is worth examining what their intellectual background consisted in.[[49]](#footnote-49) As a matter of fact, these two authors shared a Stoicizing tendency.

Even though the extent of Strabo’s knowledge of Stoic doctrines is disputed by scholars, his relations with the Stoic school are evident and he seems to have identified as a Stoic.[[50]](#footnote-50) In *Geography* 1.2.34 and 16.4.27, in the context of a textual amendment to a Homeric verse, he speaks of “our Zeno.” In a discussion of Homer’s work, he refers to the Stoics as “our men (οἱ δ᾿ ἡμέτεροι)” (*Geogr.* 1.2.3; see also 2.3.8). As Daniela Dueck notes, “Strabo’s affiliation to the Stoic school is evident in the personal turn of these phrases.”[[51]](#footnote-51) Moreover, Germaine Aujac has identified a kinship between Strabo’s work and the “orthodox Stoicism” of Zeno, Cleanthes, and Chrysippus.[[52]](#footnote-52) Dueck also claims that the influence of Stoicism is perceptible in Strabo’s use of Stoic terminology and concepts. She argues that “A study of Strabo’s background and his treatment of various topics in the *Geography* shows that Strabo was indeed deeply embedded in the world of philosophy and had special tendencies towards Stoicism.”[[53]](#footnote-53) Strabo’s association with Stoicism also explains his use of Posidonius as a source, for Posidonius would then have been of interest to him not only as a geographer but also as a Stoic philosopher. Dueck points out that Strabo was the disciple of Posidonius’s grandson, Aristodemus and a friend of the Stoic Athenodorus of Tarsus, a disciple of Posidonius.[[54]](#footnote-55)

Diodorus did not openly claim an affiliation with Stoicism but was undoubtedly influenced by the Stoa. As Kenneth Sacks writes, “though not a Stoic thinker, Diodorus chose material that embodied many such sentiments, and his frequently employed standard of judgment – whether someone or something benefited humanity – is well founded in Stoicism.”[[55]](#footnote-56) The opening section of the *Historical Library*, which in the past was often attributed to Posidonius but is now recognized as reflecting general Stoic ethical principles that were widespread in the first century BCE, argues that people ought to be thankful to historians who have written universal histories, because:

It has been the aspiration of these writers to marshal all men, who, although united one to another by their kinship (*syngeneia*), are yet separated by space and time, into one and the same orderly body. And such historians have therein shown themselves to be, as it were, ministers of Divine Providence.[[56]](#footnote-57)

This passage is replete with Stoic concepts, such as the notion of a general kinship (*syngeneia*) between all human beings or that of divine providence at work in uniting humankind. Given Diodorus’s universalist perspective, he would have been critical of the Jews’ insistence on their separateness. This perspective, perhaps combined with his emphasis on the value of *philanthrōpia,* may have been at the root of his characterization of the them as misanthropic (which appears twice in his work).

2. Apion

Apion was born in Egypt, which does not mean that he was Egyptian.[[57]](#footnote-58) He could have been of Macedonian stock, or from another non-Egyptian ethnic group. Josephus claims that Apion was Egyptian (*C. Ap.* 2.29–30) but that may have been a way of denigrating him in the eyes of his Greco-Roman audience. In any case, at some point in his life, Apion became an Alexandrian citizen[[58]](#footnote-59) and was part of the Alexandrian delegation to Rome after the riots of 38 CE.[[59]](#footnote-60) He was a grammarian and a rhetor rather than a philosopher, particularly renowned for his expertise in Homer.[[60]](#footnote-61) ;his encyclopedic knowledge is evident from the range of topics about which he is cited in Pliny’s *Natural* *History*, including remedies made from animals, fishes’ intelligence, painting, the nature of stones, etc. Seneca notes that while Apion was traveling in Greece, he was regarded in every city as a second Homer.[[61]](#footnote-62) He was also one of the main anti-Jewish voices in Alexandria in the first century CE. Since he was famous, his ideas may have influenced other authors, including in the city of Rome, where he taught for some time.

According to Josephus’s testimony, Apion referred to Posidonius and Apollonius Molon as having held anti-Jewish opinions:

79 I am amazed also by those who have supplied Apion with fodder of this sort, that is, Posidonius and Apollonius Molon. For, on the one hand, they make it a charge against us that we do not worship the same Gods as other people, while at the same time, when they issue lies and concoct incongruous slanders about our temple, they do not consider what they do irreligious, although proper gentlemen consider a lie on any topic extremely disgraceful, and particularly so in relation to a temple that is universally acclaimed and powerful with such great sanctity. 80 For Apion dared to assert that in this shrine the Judeans had set up the head of an ass, and worshipped that animal, considering it worthy of the greatest reverence. He claims that this was revealed when Antiochus Epiphanes plundered the temple and discovered this head, made of gold and worth a considerable sum of money.[[62]](#footnote-63)

Apion apparently cited Posidonius and the rhetor Apollonius Molon—another famous character in the first century BCE[[63]](#footnote-64)—in order to support his charges against the Jews, arguing that their religious commitment to exclusivity was a sign of hostility toward non-Jews. As I mentioned in the introduction,[[64]](#footnote-65) it is unclear whether the claim that Jews worshipped the head of an ass in the Jerusalem temple goes back to Apion’s sources or originates with him; the excerpts from Strabo and Diodorus attributed to Posidonius do not corroborate that claim. As to Molon, his work against the Jews is lost and we have no way to ascertain whether he wrote anything of the sort. The extent to which Posidonius and Molon shared the same views about the Jews remains an open question, although they seem to have had partly converging ideas. Since Josephus refers to Molon much more than to Posidonius, it may be asked whether Apion had direct knowledge of Posidonius’s thought or knew about his ideas through Molon, who was personally acquainted with the Stoic philosopher.

Elsewhere in *Against Apion*, Josephus writes that Molon accused the Jews of atheism and misanthropy (*misanthrōpia*) (*C. Ap.* 2.148), and this reproach surfaces also in the ideas attributed to Apion, especially in *Against Apion* 2.121, where Josephus writes: “There is a further lie concerning an oath, that we swear by the God who made heaven and earth and sea to show good will to no foreigner, and especially not to Greeks (μηδενὶ εὐνοήσειν ἀλλοφύλῳ, μάλιστα δὲ Ἕλλησιν).” Josephus does not use the word *misanthrōpia* itself in his depiction of Apion’s slanders, but the notion of hatred toward all *allophyloi* is clear enough.

What was Apion’s intellectual background? Josephus gives us a precious clue in *Against Apion* 2.135:

But we have not produced remarkable men, such as inventors in the arts or exceptional intellectuals. And he (Apion) enumerates Socrates, Zeno, Cleanthes, and the like. Then—the most amazing thing—he adds himself to those he has listed and congratulates Alexandria on having such a citizen![[65]](#footnote-66)

Zeno and Cleanthes were the first two leading figures in the history of Stoicism. The reference to Socrates may be explained by the fact that the Stoics imagined a chain of transmission that connected Zeno to Socrates through the Cynics.[[66]](#footnote-67) This passing remark teaches us that Apion identified with the Stoa, and there is no reason to doubt Josephus’s statement.

This quotation allows us to add Apion to our list of writers who were both affiliated with Stoicism and expressed hostility to the Jews. It is reasonable to posit that these writers’ attribution of misanthropy to the Jews was related to their Stoic universalism, which found fault with Jewish “particularism,” perceived or at least described as an expression of hatred for non-Jews.

3. Euphrates

Euphrates was born in the 30’s CE and died in 119 or 121. His Syrian origin is well-established, but his specific place of birth is less clear: it may have been either Tyre or Epiphaneia.[[67]](#footnote-68) Apparently, he stayed in Alexandria for some time, where he taught and had an audience. Around 96–97 CE he probably spent some time in Rome, where he seems to have enjoyed an excellent reputation, with both Epictetus and Pliny the Younger describing Euphrates in very laudatory terms.[[68]](#footnote-71) His writings are lost, but Philostratus, in the 2nd–3rd century CE, reports some anecdotes about Euphrates in his *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, in the context of the latter’s conflict with Apollonius, Philostratus’s hero.[[69]](#footnote-72)

The passage most relevant to the present investigation is found in the retelling of Vespasian’s visit to Alexandria in 69 CE, in book 5 of the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*. Vespasian is in the process of becoming Rome’s new emperor. During a meeting with Apollonius, Euphrates, and Dio Chrysostomus, three men renowned for their wisdom, he asks them how he should proceed to restore respect for the imperial throne among the Romans.[[70]](#footnote-73) Euphrates replies that he should give the Roman people back their freedom, meaning that Vespasian ought to reestablish the Republic. After a speech on the dangers of tyranny, he states that Vespasian should have used his army to fight against Nero rather than against the Jews:

The plot that Vindex formed against him should have stirred you more than anyone, by Heracles. You had an army, and the forces you were leading against the Jews were more suitable for punishing Nero. The Jews cut themselves off long ago, not only from the Romans, but from all mankind, since people who have devised an unsociable way of life, with no meals, libations, prayers, or sacrifices in common with other men, have moved further away from us than Susa, Bactria, and the Indians beyond that. There was no point in punishing them as rebels, when they would have been better left unconquered. (*Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 5.33).[[71]](#footnote-74)

According to Philostratus’s account, Euphrates characterized the Jewish way of life as misanthropic. Even though the term *misanthrōpia* is not used, the text refers to their *bios amiktos* and their separation from all other human beings.[[72]](#footnote-75) In particular, this short passage emphasizes separation at meals (thus objecting to the Jewish dietary laws) and during cultic practices—two aspects of social life that were closely associated in Greek cities. In a way, this text reflects a perspective that is similar to Apollonius Molon’s statement in *Against Apion* 2.148 that Jews are both atheists (*atheoi*) and misanthropes (*misanthrōpoi*). Euphrates, a Stoic philosopher, apparently resented the fact that Jews did not want to share meals and religious rituals with their “neighbors.” From Euphrates’s perspective, this meant that Jews, while geographically close to Greeks and Romans, were nevertheless further apart from them than distant peoples such as the Persians and the Indians, who in the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* appear as partly Hellenized and thus as sharing Hellenistic values to some extent.[[73]](#footnote-76) Euphrates’s discourse reveals a tendency to consider Greek modes of thinking and values as universal, leading to disparaging comments on groups and ways of life that were at variance with Greek standards. Despite Euphrates’s hostility to Jewish “particularism,” his conclusion differs significantly from that put forward by Antiochus VII’s advisors as reported by Diodorus. According to Euphrates, Vespasian should leave the Jews alone rather than seek to exterminate them.[[74]](#footnote-77)

In Philostratus’s *Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, this view of the Jews is peculiar to Euphrates, and I see no good reason to doubt the attribution. The perception of the Jewish way of life as misanthropic has several parallels in a late first-century or early second-century context (Quintillian, Juvenal, Tacitus), but vanishes altogether from the sources dated to the second half of the second century onward (i.e., at Philostratus’s time). Under the circumstances, it makes sense to attribute this view to Euphrates.

Conclusion

All in all, it appears that most (if not all) of the Greek texts accusing the Jews of misanthropic behavior or characterizing the Jewish laws as misanthropic were written or transmitted by authors who either were Stoic philosophers or displayed a clear affinity with the Stoa.[[75]](#footnote-78) It is unlikely that this recurring pattern is a matter of chance. I suggest that the Stoic emphasis on the community and solidarity of all men, united by their common rationality and nature-based morality, made it all the more difficult for people influenced by this worldview to understand the Jews’ social and religious separateness, especially in places where Jews were Hellenized and participated in civic life to some extent (as in Alexandria).[[76]](#footnote-79)

I do not claim that an author’s ideological (or philosophical) background is the single key factor contributing to anti-Jewish statements—only that it played an important role alongside the political factors discussed by other scholars. In short, to analyze ancient antisemitism properly, we must tackle the issue from various perspectives, taking into account both political factors and intellectual or cultural ones. As far as the authors discussed in this article are concerned, in addition to the ideological dimension analyzed above we have to consider the following factors. Posidonius presumably identified with the Greeks against whom the Hasmoneans fought. Apion’s antisemitic discourse developed in Alexandria and cannot be separated from the political conflict in that city between the Greeks and the Jews around the issue of Alexandrian citizenship and the Jews’ right to organize themselves as an autonomous community. Euphrates’s hostility toward the Jews should probably be understood in light of his Syrian origins. His vision of the Jews as a misanthropic people may have been rooted in the writings of previous authors from this area such as Timochares and Posidonius. In addition, local conflicts between Jews and Greco-Syrians, as documented by Josephus both before and after the Great Jewish Revolt, may have played a role as well.[[77]](#footnote-80)

Accusations of misanthropy tend to vanish from our sources from the middle of the second century CE onward. This may have to do with the political weakness experienced by Jews within the Roman empire and the fact that they ceased to be involved in armed conflicts with other inhabitants of the empire.

Yet again, some ideological and even philosophical factors probably played a role too. The characterization of the Jewish laws as misanthropic is not found in the works of authors who belonged to the Medio- or Neoplatonic schools, such as Numenius of Apamea, Celsus, Porphyry, or Iamblichus. This may have to do with the fact that Neoplatonism valued people’s faithfulness to their ancestral customs and considered their distinctive characteristics legitimate, even when it came to dietary regulations that prevented participation in common meals. Not only were Medio- and Neoplatonic authors more tolerant of Jewish customs, but some of them also referred to Jewish customs and beliefs in laudatory terms. Numenius is said to have written “For what is Plato, but Moses speaking in Attic?”[[78]](#footnote-81) and to have considered the institutions, rites, and doctrines of the Jews as basically in agreement with Plato’s teachings.[[79]](#footnote-82) Porphyry reported that Pythagoras had been a disciple of the Hebrews and considered the Jews to be far more respectable than the Christians.[[80]](#footnote-83) In contrast, even though not all Stoic thinkers resented the Jews’ separateness, we do not have a single example of a positive judgment on Jews or Judaism by a Stoic author (Posidonius’s praise of Moses notwithstanding).[[81]](#footnote-84)

1. See Mélèze-Modrzejewski, Jews of Egypt, 161–83; Barclay, Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora, 48–71; Schäfer, Judeophobia, 136–60; Schimanowski, Juden und Nichtjuden in Alexandrien; Gambetti, Alexandrian Riots. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The Greek and Roman sources on Jews and Judaism have been gathered by Menahem Stern in his monumental *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (henceforth *GLAJJ*). On the issue of anti-Judaism in Antiquity (or: ancient antisemitism), see, e.g., Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism*; de Lange, “The Origins of Anti-Semitism”; Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*; Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 1–8, 197; Isaac, *The Invention of Racism*, 240–46; Gruen, “Was There Judeophobia in Classical Antiquity?”; Bloch, “Ancient Anti-Semitism”; Bloch, “Antisemitism and Early Scholarship.” [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See Berthelot, Philanthrôpia judaica, esp. 79–184; Bloch, “Misanthropia,” 832–35. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See Aristophanes, *Birds* 1549 and *Lysistrata* (featuring Timon); Plato, *Protagoras* 327 d; Menander, *Dyskolos* (“The Misanthrope”) (featuring Knemon); Diphilos, *The Misanthropes*. For other examples of Greek plays featuring misanthropes (many of which are lost), see de Romilly, *La douceur*, 206. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Wisdom of Solomon 19:13 (Egyptians); Josephus, *A.J.* 1.194 (the inhabitants of Sodom). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Diodorus, *Historical Library* 34/35.1.3; 40.3.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 5.33 (on which see below); Josephus, *A.J.* 11.212, 13.245, 13.247. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Unfortunately, his works are lost; but several ancient authors explicitly refer to Posidonius and his writings or are considered to have used his works. As a consequence, scholars have attempted to reconstruct his thought by collecting testimonia and excerpts. See Jacoby, *Fragmente der grieschichen Historiker* (henceforth *FGrH*) IIa:222–317 and IIc: 154–220 (for Posidonius’s historical texts); Edelstein and Kidd, *Posidonius I: The Fragments*, *Posidonius II: The Commentary*, *Posidonius III: The Translation of the Fragments*; Theiler, *Poseidonios: Die Fragmente*. The collection edited by Edelstein and Kidd differs from those of Jacoby and Theiler because it includes only texts that name Posidonius explicitly. On the methodological problems raised by the indirect transmission of Posidonius’s work, see Kidd, “Posidonian Methodology.” [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. On Cicero’s and Pompey’s visits to Posidonius, see Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 2.61. In 60 BCE, Posidonius sent a letter to Cicero; see Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* 21 (2.1) (LCL, 127). Concerning Pompey, see also Pliny, *Natural History* 7.112; Plutarch, *Life of Pompey* 42.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Suda, s.v. Ποσειδώνιος. See the discussion of the conventional dates of Posidonius’s life (135–51 BCE) in Bar-Kokhva, *Image of the Jews*, 339–40. On Posidonius’s life, see Reinhardt, *Poseidonios*, 4–8; Reinhardt, “Poseidonios,” 563–67; Pohlenz, *Stoa*, 208–12; Laffranque, *Poseidonios* d’Apamée, 45–97; Malitz, *Historien*, 5–33. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. That there was a Jewish community in Apamea in the first century CE is shown by Josephus, *B.J.* 2.479. It is probable, but not certain, that this community was already established in the first century BCE. See Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 3.1:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Berthelot, “Poseidonios”; Bloch, “Posidonian Thoughts”; Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, 338–468. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. For an attempt to reconstruct the structure of Posidonius’s *Histories*, see Jacoby, *FGrH* IIa2, 155–56; Laffranque, *Poseidonios*, 119–21; Malitz, *Historien*,34–59, 257–302. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The exact date of the siege is disputed, but it probably occurred in 132 BCE. See, e.g., Ariel, “Archaeological Evidence,” esp. 260–64. See also Bar-Kochva, *Image of the* Jews, 399–439. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Bar-Kochva claims that Apion completely misrepresented Posidonius’s view of the Jews (*Image of the Jews*, 441, 443). See the discussion of *C. Ap.* 2.79–80 below (§2). The only clear accusation that can be traced back to Posidonius according to Josephus’s *Against Apion* is the charge of not worshipping the same gods as other peoples, which contradicts the account in Strabo’s *Geography* that is based on Posidonius (see below, §1.1). Josephus also alludes to a story concerning the Jerusalem temple, but the content of the story in Apion’s sources, and whether exactly the same elements were found in both Posidonius and Apollonius Molon, remains unclear. It is to Apion himself that Josephus ascribes the idea that Jews worshipped the head of an ass (2.80). In §2.89 he adds that Apion accused the Jews of sacrificing a Greek every year, based on what “the Greeks” say (*de Graecis*). This reference to “the Greeks” is much too vague to allow us to conclude that Apion referred to Posidonius in this context (*pace* Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, 441). Moreover, as Barclay notes, “There is no reason to think that an inventive author such as Apion simply repeated the material in his sources…: he could have derived from Posidonius the story of the discovery by Antiochus Epiphanes, but altered the content of what he actually discovered” (*Against Apion*, 211). As we shall see below, the passage in Diodorus that is attributed to Posidonius refers to Antiochus’s profanation of the Jerusalem temple, but it does not mention his encounter with a Greek prisoner about to be sacrificed. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. See Strabo 16.2.34–46; Stern, *GLAJJ*, 1:294–311 (no. 115). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Translation by H.L. Jones, LCL, 283. All quotations are from this translation unless stated otherwise. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. On βρῶμα as “meal,” see, e.g., Plato, *Laws* 953e, a passage in which meals and religious ceremonies are associated with the expulsion of foreigners from Egypt. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, 373. Note that the depiction of Judeans as robbers recurs elsewhere in Strabo’s *Geography* (16.2.28: “the Judaeans have used this place as a seaport when they have gone down as far as the sea; but the seaports of robbers are obviously only robbers’ dens”; trans. Jones, LCL, 275), and is also found in Pompeius Trogus (*Prol.* 39; Justin 40.2.4; Stern, *GLAJJ*, 1:343). Strabo describes other groups in the region as robbers, especially those located in montainous areas; see *Geogr.* 16.2.18 (Itureans and Arabs, called *kakourgoi*). He also associates robbery and tyranny in other contexts, for example in his description of the area of Mount Olympus in Asia Minor: “Mt. Olympus, then, is not only well settled all round but also has on its heights immense forests and places so well-fortified by nature that they can support bands of robbers (λῃστήρια); and among these bands there often arise tyrants (τύραννοι) who are able to maintain their power for a long time” (*Geogr.* 12.8.8, Jones, LCL, 497). [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Pompey “gave orders to rase all the walls and, so far as he could, destroyed the haunts of robbers and the treasure-holds of the tyrants. Two of these were situated on the passes leading to Hiericus, I mean Threx and Taurus, and others were Alexandrium and Hyrcanium and Machaerus and Lysias and those in the neighborhood of Philadelphia and Scythopolis in the neighborhood of Galilaea” (Jones, LCL, 291). On these fortresses, see also Josephus, *A.J.* 13.418, 14.89. That Strabo viewed Roman rule as putting an end to robbery comes to the fore in *Geogr.* 16.2.20: “For the most part, indeed, the barbarians have been robbing the merchants from Arabia Felix, but this is less the case now that the band of robbers under Zenodorus has been broken up through the good government established by the Romans and through the security established by the Roman soldiers that are kept in Syria” (Jones, LCL, 265). [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, 355–98. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Ludlam, “The God of Moses in Strabo” (in Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, 525–41). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. See Reinach, *Textes*, 89, 99; Heinemann, “Poseidonios”; Morr, “Landeskunde,” esp. 259–71; Bickerman, *Gott der Makkabäer*, 130–31; Strasburger, “Poseidonios,” 44; Theiler, *Poseidonios*, 1:112–14 and 2:96–9; Malitz, *Historien*, 315–18. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. See Aly, *Strabon von Amasia*, 191–209; Nock, “Posidonius,” 5–9; Gager, *Moses*, 38–47; Stern, *GLAJJ*, 1:264–66, 305–6; Lebram, “Der Idealstaat der Juden”; Gauger, “Eine missverstandene Strabonstelle”; Kidd, *Posidonius*, 2:951–52; Gabba, “Growth of Anti-Judaism,” 648. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. See Laffranque, *Poseidonios*, 1–44. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. See Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, 3:156–57; Nock, “Posidonius,” 8–9; Gager, *Moses*, 44–47. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. As already noted by Stern, *GLAJJ*, 1:266. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, 394. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, 393 and 397 respectively. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. *A.J.* 13.246; Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, Chapter 12, esp. 422, 431–32. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. See Berthelot, “Poseidonios.” Even though the pattern of the state’s decline and its transformation into a tyranny can be found elsewhere in Posidonius’s thought, the references to dietary laws, circumcision, excision (*sic*), and the Hasmonean wars point specifically to the Judaism of Posidonius’s time and not merely to a general philosophical scheme. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. The theme of robbery surfaces elsewhere in the book; in 16.2.28 it is also connected to the Jews in the Hasmonean period (as the possession of the Joppa harbour indicates). See note 19 above. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Hahm, “Posidonius’ Theory,” 1339. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, 390: “There are ample reasons to conclude that the restrained, moderate cult practices ordained by Moses, and the implied praise of Jewish self-isolation originated in Posidonius.” [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. On *philanthrōpia* as the virtue of philosophers or wise men who share their knowledge with others and help them live better, see Berthelot, Philanthrôpia judaica, 52–56. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. See Laffranque, *Poseidonios*, 496. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Juvenal, *Satires* 14.100–104. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Reinhardt, “Poseidonios,” 627–28. On the universal kinship (*syngeneia*) connecting individuals and peoples, see, e.g., Diodorus 37.15.2; Strabo 1.2.34. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Moreover, Bar-Kochva notes that “traces of the Posidonian version, positive but marginal, may be detected in the Jewish ethnography of Tacitus, despite his overall great hostility” (*Image of the Jews*, 398). Tacitus may have known Posidonius’s historical work, be it only indirectly. See René Bloch, *Antike Vorstellungen*, 11–12, 176–85. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. *Bibliotheca* 244, 379a–380a. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Diodorus 34/35.1.1–5; trans. Francis R. Walton, LCL, 53–55, slightly modified. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. See, e.g., Schwartz, “Diodoros,”690–91; Reinhardt, “Poseidonios,” 630–38; Jacoby, *FGrH* IIIc, 157; Strasburger, “Poseidonios,” 42; Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, 33–34; Malitz, *Historien*, 34–42. Even Kenneth S. Sacks, who criticizes the way that most scholars have considered Diodorus a mere compiler, does not contest the attribution of most of books 34/35 to Posidonius (*Diodorus Siculus*, 22, 47–48, 120–21, 142). Laffranque, however, prefers to not use Diodorus to reconstruct Posidonius’s work, because she posits that Diodorus has combined several sources (*Poseidonios*, 111). Stern cautiously states that the attribution to Posidonius is not assured (*GLAJJ*, 1:142–43, 168). [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Image of the Jews, 412. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. See, e.g., Sacks, “Diodoros of Sicily,” for a critical assessment of this scholarly tradition. Michael Rathmann refers to Jonas Palm, Walter Spoerri, Massimiliano Pavan, Klaus Meister, Kenneth S. Sacks, Delfino Ambaglio, and Nicolas Wiater as challenging this conventional view (*Diodor und seine “Bibliotheke”*, 308, 350). Rathmann himself is more critical of Diodorus but concludes that “Undoubtedly, Diodorus was a bad historian and a modest writer, but he was no ‘geistloser Kompilator (mechanical compilator)’” (350). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. See Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 9.35. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. As mentioned above, Bar-Kochva refers to Josephus’s version of the siege of Jerusalem (which he considers to stem from Posidonius’s account through Strabo) to argue that Posidonius praised the Jews’ *eusebeia* and thus understood that their desire to remain secluded from other peoples was for the sake of worshipping God (*Image of the Jews*, 422, 431–32). There are two problems with this reasoning. First, in Josephus’s *Jewish Antiquities*, the king’s praise of the Jews’ *eusebeia* is clearly a Josephan reworking. The connection between piety toward God and separateness has many parallels in Josephus’s work. In *Against Apion*, he argues that such piety is grounded in the Jewish laws and compatible with *philanthrōpia* (see, e.g., 1.60, 2.146, 2.184, 2.291). Second, Bar-Kochva compares Josephus’s text with Strabo’s account of Mosaic “Judaism” and argues that the reasoning is identical in both cases. However, as I have shown above (§1.1), Strabo/Posidonius does not describe Moses as motivated by a desire for seclusion from other peoples; moreover, Strabo’s account sharply criticizes the superstition of contemporary Jews (which means that they have no true piety) and the wars waged by the Judeans against their neighbors. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. See Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, 444–48. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Plutarch, *Life of Pompey* 27.4 and 28.4–5. Strasburger attributes this passage to Posidonius (“Poseidonios,” 42–43, n. 35). See also Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus*, 151, n. 136. The theme of clemency and humaneness toward defeated enemies is found repeatedly in Diodorus’s work (13.22.3, 33.15.1, 33.18.1, 34/35.3.1, 34/35.20.1, 36.4.8, 37.26.1; Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus*, 43–44), and it was common in Greek historiographical works at large. However, for Jean-Louis Ferrary the probability that this motif goes back to Posidonius in books 33–35 is very strong: “Sans doute s’agit-il là d’un thème bien attesté dans l’ensemble de l’œuvre de Diodore, mais il revient avec trop d’insistance, en particulier dans ce qui nous reste des livres 33 à 35, et il fait trop penser, plus encore qu’à Polybe utilisé par Diodore dans les livres 28 à 32, à ce que le second livre du *De Officiis* nous apprend de l’enseignement de Panétius, pour qu’on ne soit pas tenté d’y voir l’influence des *Histoires* de Posidonius” (*Philhellénisme et impérialisme*, 490–91). [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. I mentioned above the shift that occurred in studies of Diodorus, which led to a reevaluation of his role as an author (see note 44). As to Strabo, the fact that he relied not only on written works but also on oral traditions and his own eye-witness observations of certain places has prevented scholars from viewing him as a mere compiler. Even in cases where Strabo used only written sources, he should be considered at least partly responsible for the final text. See, e.g., Dueck, *Strabo of Amasia*; Nicolai, “Dalla Quellenforschung alle linee di tradizione”; Nicolai, “Lo scrittoio di Strabone,” esp. 224. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Jérôme Laurent prefers to consider Strabo an eclectic thinker (“Strabon”). Both Laurent and Ludlam note that his teachers were Peripatetic, not Stoic (Laurent, “Strabon,” 112; Ludlam, “The God of Moses,” in Bar-Kochva, *Image of the Jews*, 535–36). Yet this point simply shows that he became acquainted with the Stoic school at a later stage. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Strabo of Amasia, 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Aujac, “Strabon et le stoïcisme”. See also Aujac, “Sur une définition d’ἀρετή.” [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. *Strabo of Amasia*, 62. See also Hatzimichali, “Strabo’s Philosophy and Stoicism” (which argues that “the priorities of Strabo’s geographical project reflect on his interpretation of Stoicism” [18]). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Dueck, *Strabo of Amasia*, 65 and 68, notes that it could also be Posidonius’s reputation that attracted Strabo to Stoicism, for Strabo “calls him ‘Posidonius, the Stoic, the most learned (*polymathestatos*) of all philosophers of my time’ (16.2.10, C 753)” (65). Athenaeus claims that Strabo was personally acquainted with Posidonius, which seems unlikely in view of the age difference; see *The Learned Banqueters* 14, 657f. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. Sacks, *Diodorus Siculus*, 64. See also Busolt, “Diodorus’ Verhältnis zum Stoicismus” (which explains most of Diodorus’s references to Stoic notions through his sources, deeming him incapable of a truly autonomous thinking). [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. Diodorus 1.1.3, trans. C. H. Oldfather, LCL, 5–7. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. *Pace* Schäfer, *Judeophobia*, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. See Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.32; Lévy, “Apion était-il Alexandrin?”. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. See Smallwood, *Jews under Roman Rule*, 243. Interestingly, in *On the Embassy to Gaius*, Philo does not mention Apion among the members of the Alexandrian delegation; he puts the blame on Isidorus (§355). In contrast, Josephus suggests that the chief ambassador was Apion (*A.J.* 18.257, 259). [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. See for example Seneca, *Letters to Lucilius* 88.40; Athenaeus, *The Learned Banqueters* 1, 16f; Schürer, *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, 3:538–44; Cohn, “Apion,” 2803–4; Stern, *GLAJJ*,1:389–90; Troiani, *Commento Storico*, 48–50. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. *Letters to Lucilius* 88.40. See also Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 5.14.1, 6.8.4, 7.8.1. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. Trans. Barclay, *Against Apion*, 211–13. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. Molon was active in Rhodes at the same time as Posidonius, probably took part in the Rhodian embassy to Rome together with Posidonius in 87 BCE, and, like the latter, had a great influence on renowned Romans like Cicero, M. Favonius, T. Torquatus, and Julius Caesar. See Goulet, “Apollonios d’Alabanda.” [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. See note 15 above. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. Trans. John Barclay, *Against Apion*, 238–39. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. See Long, “Socrates,” 150–51, 160–64; Long, “The Socratic Tradition.” See, e.g., Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.21.19. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. Grimal, “Deux figures,” 371, n.5; Robiano, “Euphratès (Mestrius).” [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. Epictetus, *Discourses* 3.15.8; Pliny, *Letters* 1.10 and 10.10. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
69. See *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 1.13.3; 5.37 and 39; 8.7.7. On the conflict between Apollonius and Euphrates, see Grosso, “La ‘Vita di Apollonio di Tiana’,” esp. 403–7, 421–22, and above all 519–30; Bowie, “Apollonius of Tyana” (Bowie is more skeptical than Grosso about the historical reality of the dispute between Euphrates and Apollonius). [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
70. On this episode, see Billault, “Un sage en politique,” 28–30. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
71. Trans. Christopher P. Jones, LCL, 63–65. Ἃ γὰρ ἐνεθυμήθη Βίνδιξ ἐπ᾿ αὐτόν, σέ, νὴ τὸν Ἡρακλέα, ἐκάλει πρῶτον. καὶ γὰρ στρατιὰν εἶχες καὶ ἡ δύναμις, ἣν ἐπὶ τοὺς Ἰουδαίους ἦγες, ἐπιτηδειοτέρα ἦν τιμωρεῖσθαι Νέρωνα. ἐκεῖνοι μὲν γὰρ πάλαι ἀφεστᾶσιν οὐ μόνον Ῥωμαίων, ἀλλὰ καὶ πάντων ἀνθρώπων· οἱ γὰρ βίον ἄμικτον εὑρόντες καὶ οἷς μήτε κοινὴ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους τράπεζα μήτε σπονδαὶ μήτε εὐχαὶ μήτε θυσίαι, πλέον ἀφεστᾶσιν ἡμῶν ἢ Σοῦσα καὶ Βάκτρα καὶ οἱ ὑπὲρ ταῦτα Ἰνδοί. οὐκοῦν οὐδ᾿ εἰκὸς ἦν τιμωρεῖσθαι τούτους ἀφισταμένους, οὓς βέλτιον ἦν μηδὲ κτᾶσθαι. Philostratus then remarks that Dio Chrysostomus approved of Euphrates’s talk, especially concerning the priority to be given to the fight against Nero. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
72. Josephus also uses the vocabulary of *amixia* to refer to the Jews’ way of keeping apart from non-Jews (*A.J.* 13.245, 247), but it tends to reflect non-Jewish discourse. This is particularly striking in Josephus’s retelling of Haman’s accusations against the Jews in Esther 3:8, in *A.J.* 11.212. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
73. This is in line with the image of these areas in the rest of the *Life*. The king of India, in particular, is depicted as a true philosopher (2.25–26). See Follet, “Divers aspects,” esp. 210. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
74. Some scholars have been puzzled by Euphrates’s statement. Norman Bentwich writes: “Perhaps the sophist [*sic*] was a disguised Judaizer who sought in this way to divert the might of Rome from the destruction of the Jewish center” (“The Graeco-Roman View,” 346). This is a clear misunderstanding of Euphrates’s perspective. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
75. For a comprehensive study of the accusations of misanthropy against the Jews, see Berthelot, *Philanthrôpia Judaica*, Chapter 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
76. In a similar vein, Martin Hengel wrote in connection with the accusations of misanthropy against the Jews, that “Nicht die Abschliessung in einer Nationalreligion mit absonderlichen Gebräuchen, sondern das Weltbürgertum war das Ideal des Gebildeten, das durch die Stoa zum geistigen Allgemeingut wurde …” (*Judentum und Hellenismus*, 549). [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
77. See Josephus, *Vita* 42–45; *B.J.* 7.41–62; Roth-Gerson, “Anti-Semitism in Syria”; Mason, *A History of the Jewish* War, 225–39, 277. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
78. See Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.22.150.4; Stern, *GLAJJ*, 2:209. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
79. See Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.* 9.7.1; Stern, *GLAJJ*, 2:211–12. Christian authors also reported that Numenius had given an allegorical interpretation of biblical passages, which, if this information is true, would put him among the first “pagan” authors to show a real interest for Jewish Scriptures. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
80. *Life of Pythagoras* 11; Stern, *GLAJJ*, 2:443–44. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
81. Chaeremon and Seneca wrote negative things about the Jews but we do not have evidence that they accused them of misanthropic behavior. Epictetus’s remarks on the Jews are more neutral, although not really positive. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)