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Aristeas 1-40 and Judean National Identity

It would be helpful if the main focus of discussion on this paper would focus on the way the community identity is discussed. Does this sort of model aid in the way one can understand the concept of Judea(ns) for the author? Also, do those familiar with the Letter of Aristeas agree with the scholarly consensus that the main point of this text is to present the author's ideal picture of Judaism? The concern is that a study of the nature of the community should not be attempted if it is not at least one of the goals of the text. Any other insights and comments on other topics would of course be appreciated.

Many scholars have pointed out the apologetic nature of the Letter of Aristeas to Philocrates[1]. There has been far less consensus on the nature of the apology and the ideology espoused by the author. While almost all of these scholars aver that the author suggests some aspect or essential quality of Judaism, but what that is and how it is accomplished is as diverse as the scholars who have written concerning Aristeas. Andrews has argued that Jewish political liberty, allegorical interpretation of the law, wisdom, universality of cult, and the admiration for the High priesthood combine to show the supremacy of Judaism[2]. Moses Hadas read Aristeas as arguing for a spiritual Judaism "of a form that could survive loss of national independence and even of the central sanctuary[3]." Collins, like Hadas, sees in Aristeas a Judaism devoid of nationalism and based on the Jewish law[4]. However, this Judaism can only be realized by an

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[1] Herbert T. Andrews "Letter of Aristeas" *APOT* ed. R.H. Charles (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 84-85; Moses Hadas *Aristeas to Philocrates (Letter of Aristeas)* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), 60; John J. Collins *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 85; V. Tcherikover "The Ideology of the Letter of Aristeas" *Harvard Theological Review* 51:2 (April 1958) 59-85, 59, where he offers a historical summary of the scholars who see the Letter as Jewish apologetic directed at gentiles. Tcherikover later argues that it is not apologetic but his reading simply sees the letter as an apology to Jews instead of one on behalf of Jews to Greeks. However see the objections of Sylvie Honigman "The Narrative Function of the King and the Library in the Letter of Aristeas" in *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007) 128, 130, who suggests that an argument concerning Judaism at a whole is not present in the text.

[2] Andrews, "Letter", 85.

[3] Hadas, *Aristeas*, 62.

[4] Collins, *Athens*, 85-86.

interpretation of the law by Greek education and wisdom[5]. The picture of Judaism pushed by Aristeas according to Tcherikover also is outside the bounds of nationalism, but is also not clearly Greek. For him, Aristeas' Judaism is bland and colorless and full of foreign influences[6]. Clearly there is a wealth of evidence concerning the brand of Judaism put forth by Aristeas, or else so many diverse views would not be possible. The trouble has been that no system has emerged that adequately explains and weights all the information appropriately.

It is our contention, particularly in diametric opposition to Hadas, Collins, and Tcherikover that the Judaism (or rather a more chronologically appropriate term: Judean identity) is argued for holistically in the Letter of Aristeas. The author wishes to present Judeans as a well-established, well-defined community with its own laws, history, and culture. Further, the author presents this picture of Judaism not to favorably compare it to Hellenism, or Egyptian culture, but so that Judaism can take its rightful place among the other cultures in the Hellenistic milieu. In short, the text should be understood as an effort to raise the awareness and pride in the Judean identity of the Judean expatriate community in Egypt, perhaps with a view toward later mobilization.

This hypothesis rests on the assumption that the previous studies have approached the text using false premises or a faulty methodology. Despite a lack of agreement on the ideology put forth in the Letter of Aristeas, all the major studies aside from Andrews are in agreement that the Judaism presented is not nationalistic. Even Andrews' picture of Aristeas' Judaism is less national identity or pride and more propaganda[7], though it may share some qualities with a description of national spirit. One major problem with these studies is the vagueness of how nationalism or national identity is defined. Tcherikover and Hadas never define what they mean when they say the test lacks the characteristics of nationalism. Collins provides some definition for the various identities he posits for the books of the Jewish diaspora, and his definition of national identity[8]-common territory,

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[5] Idem., 179.
[6] Tcherikover, "Ideology", 84.
[7] Andrews, "Letter", 85.
[8] Collins, *Athens*, 1.

political loyalty, ethnic continuity, common language, religious observance and tradition- has some merit. However, he seems to have too inflexible an idea of how these markers can operate in a group, claiming that after the exile many of the qualities of nationalism disappeared because of Israel being far-flung and living under different rulers and speaking diverse languages[9]. The modern social scientific study of nations and nationalism does not put limits on such constructs provided that the sentiment of commonality in many of these areas exists among the people. All of these conceptions of national identity are lacking in some way when compared to the normal social scientific understanding of the term. It is no wonder that these scholars are not able to find national sentiment in the text of Aristeas, because they are not looking for the proper qualities.

Our study of the Judean[10] identity found in the Letter of Aristeas turns to the social sciences for guidance on the proper terms, definitions, and methods for judging a group's identity. Anthony D. Smith, the father of the method of ethno-symbolism, has defined a nation as:

> A named and self-defined human community sharing common myths, memories and symbols, residing in and attached to a historic territory, and united by common codes of communication, and a distinctive public culture, and common customs and laws.[11]

Smith distinguishes the nation from an ethnie, or ethnic community, which he characterizes as "a named community of shared origin myths, memories, and one or more element(s) of common culture, including an association with a specific territory[12]." These are the two most defined and developed organizations of communities in ethno-symbolic paradigm[13]. Both of these manifestations of community identity rely on six

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[9] Ibid., 1.

[10] We will constantly use Judea and Judeans in place of Judaism or Jews when speaking of our own investigation, as the latter two terms are not only foreign to Letter of Aristeas, but may also be foreign to all Jews until much later. Cf. Steve Mason "Jews, Judeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History" *JSJ* 38 (2007) 457-512.

[11] Anthony D. Smith "Ethnicity and Nationalism" in *The SAGE Handbook of Nations and Nationalism* (London: Sage, 2006), 175.

[12] Idem, "When is a Nation?" *Geopolitics* 7:2 (2002) 5-32, 15.

[13] Idem, "The Problem of National Identity: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern?" *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17:3 (July 1994) 375-399, 385. Here he describes the ethnic category as the least defined group and explains that the ethnie is more defined, and the nation is

independently arising processes that, when taken together measure the degree to which a community conforms to either type. These processes are self-definition (self-identification with a common name and cognizance of a boundary between the in-group and out-group), myth and memory cultivation/ethno-history (creation and dissemination of myths and symbols by members of the community), territorialization (residence by a majority of the community in a specific place considered to be historic), emergence of common codes of communication (emergence and dissemination among a community of common languages, gestures and other forms of communication), and the rise of public culture (creation and dissemination of a distinctive public culture of symbols, values, customs, laws, and rituals)[14]. The strength of the ethno-symbolic approach for our study is two-fold: 1) It recognizes that a community's identity and the processes that inform it are not static; these change and adapt constantly from generation to generation and place to place. 2) The paradigm is specifically created to allow for the recognition of pre-modern, and non-western nations based on the primary idea of blood relationship, which is rejected by the modernist orthodoxy of the study of nations[15]. In our examination of Aristeas we will look at the evidence for the character of Judaism in light of these processes and decide if the text indicates a national or ethnic identity for Judeans. Though this examines the data of only one textual source, which is representative of a literate upper class Judean, it is important to recall that national identity in most situations is the product first of the upper class[16], and that textual constructs often reflect broader social constructs[17]. Thus we hope that the identity put forth by the Letter of Aristeas can be seen as an important intellectual statement with some broad support among at least a large amount of the Judean populace in Egypt.

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most defined. However he stresses this should not be understood as an evolutionary process.

[14] Idem, "Ethnicity", 175.

[15] Idem, "When", 15-16.

[16] Idem, "LSE Centennial Lecture: The Resurgence of Nationalism? Myth and Memory in the Renewal of Nations" *British Journal of Sociology* 47:4 (December 1996) 575-598, 591.

[17] Judith Lieu "'Impregnable Ramparts' and 'Walls of Iron': Boundary and Identity in Early 'Judaism' and 'Christianity'" *NTS* 48 (2002) 297-313, 298, and specifically related to this text Hadas *Aristeas*, 63.

Before we analyze the clues the text gives of Judean identity, let us first familiarize ourselves with the basic scholarly findings concerning the Letter of Aristeas. First the setting: it is nearly universally agreed upon that Aristeas is written sometime in the 2nd century BCE, with most estimates tending toward the latter half of the century, coinciding with the Hasmonean revolution and independence of Judea[18]. Though the text is written in good koine Greek with many elements of Hellenistic style, the profound interest in the minutiae of the Torah and other elements have led to widespread agreement that the text is composed by a Judean living in Alexandria[19]. These points are commonly accepted despite the fact that the narrator conceals himself behind the guise of a Greek courtier to Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-247 BCE) who is writing to his brother Philocrates. The ostensible subject of the letter is the translation of the Torah into Greek under the direction of Ptolemy II and Demetrius of Phalerum, but as we pointed out above, this dissembles a more significant motive concerning Judean identity[20].

We will proceed with this study by looking at the evidence in the text of Aristeas' view of Judean identity and classifying into the different processes of Smith. At the close we will then be able to assess the overall depiction of the nature of Judean identity based on the level of definition in each process. For reasons of space we will limit our study here to only the first 40 sections according to the text of Thackeray.

Aristeas 1, which offers a brief introduction on the subject of the material to follow introduces a few very important elements contributing to the Judean identity found within the text. The occasion for writing is to report on the visit by the narrator (Aristeas) to "Eleazar the high priest of the Judeans" (Ἐλεάζαρον τὸν τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἀρχιερέα).

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[18] Andrews "Letter", 85 gives a range of dates between 130 and 70 BCE, but tends to favor a date earlier in this range. Hadas, *Aristeas,* 54, believes 130 BCE is the date of composition based on a wealth of criteria that are not always valid, but the overall argument is not weakened. Collins, *Athens*, 84, also believes the time of composition to be during the reign of Ptolemy Physcon (sole rule 145-131 BCE) on the basis of a vast amount of evidence.

[19] Andrews "Letter", 84; Hadas *Aristeas*, 5-6; Sarah Pearce "Translating for Ptolemy. Patriotism and Politics in the Greek Pentateuch" in *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 165.

[20] See notes 1-6.

The introductory remarks establish, first and foremost, Aristeas' recognition of the Judeans as a named and defined population with a proper title[21]. Secondarily, the mention of Eleazar the high priest tells us, before anything else, that the man or his title hold a notable place among the Judean community. Though this role is not yet clarified, it introduces a central aspect of Judean public culture.

The role of he high priest, as well as other elements of public culture are further elucidated in Aristeas 3. Here, the narrator explains that Eleazar was held in high esteem by the citizens and others for his gentility and glory. Further, he notes that the high priest was in possession of documents of great importance *to the citizens with him and those in other places* (σὺν ἑαυτῷ καὶ τοῖς κατὰ τοὺς ἄλλους τόπους πολίταις). By these statements, the functions of the high priest are still unclear, but it is obvious that Aristeas sees envisions him as a leader of the Judean people. The most interesting aspect of this is that the Judeans are considered to be under his leadership even when not living in his country. A second element of the public culture, surely of the greatest interest and significance to Aristeas is the recognition that the high priest is in possession of documents for the interpretation of divine law[22], which are held in reverence by all Judeans. These are usually taken to be the torah. The texts are also said to be written in Hebrew characters. The introduction of this detail provides recognition of a code of communication particular to the Judean people. The fact that it is under the control of this highly honored figure of the high priest and contains legal material begins allows for the outlines of a true identity of the Judeans to appear.

Aristeas 4 begins what can only be described as an artificially associated story about the efforts of the narrator in releasing the Judean captives taken in the Ptolemaic capture of Coele-Syria. The passage introduces two new pieces of evidence to the equation. First, it gives the name of the Judean homeland, which was alluded to in Aristeas 3. Second, it begins the storyline that asserts the independence and liberty of the

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[21] The term Ἰουδαῖος is used seventeen times in total to denote the Judeans, while Israel is never used. This continuity confirms that for Aristeas this was the title by which the Judeans were to be known.

[22] See e.g Hadas, *Aristeas*, 179.

Judean people, even those living under the Ptolemaic kings. This gives the Judeans a certain level of respect as a people and a political entity. Aristeas 6 underlines the respect shown for the Judean people not only by the hypothetical addressee Philocrates, but also by the Egyptian high priests. Most telling in this section is the fact that the Judeans are explicitly called a people (γένος).

The story begins in earnest with Aristeas 9, after the proem of §1-8[23]. It is not until Aristeas 10, however that the narrator returns to subjects dealing with the Judeans. In this passage Demetrius of Phalerum, who is purported to be in charge of the library[24], tells the king that the statutes of the Judeans are worthy to be transcribed and to be placed in the library. The laws are again the most important text of the Judeans, and important enough to be kept in the library of Alexandria. This however is not necessarily an enormous honor, as Demetrius explicitly states he is attempting to collect three hundred thousand additional works, which would more than double the library's holdings. Nevertheless there does seem to be an early evaluation in that the texts are deemed worthy (ἄξια).

In §11 a wealth of information concerning the Judean codes of communication is given. First, the laws of the Judeans are again said to be written in the particular characters used by the Judeans, *just as the Egyptians have their own letters* (καθάπερ Αἰγύπτιοι τῇ τῶν γραμμάτων θέσει). This not only distinguishes an element of the Judean code of communication as being identifiable only to Judeans, but compares it to the code of communications of the Egyptians themselves. That is, it puts the Judeans on an equal footing with the Egyptians. They are not simply a derivative culture, or part of an indistinguishable Semite horde, but have a writing system and language of their own, just as the great kingdom of Egypt does. This theme is continued by a second point in the paragraph wherein it is pointed out that not only their writing, but their spoken language is particular to them. The narrator even goes so far as to point out that though they are said to use Syriac, this is not the case, and their language is quite different. This further

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[23] Hadas, *Aristeas*, 92.
[24] Andrews "Letter", 83, points out that he never was in charge of the library and had actually been banished by Philadelphus at the start of his reign.

defines the Judean language, and thus identity from those around it. The Judeans are not merely a tribe of Syrians, or a community without their own language. Their language has its own character, and by extension, so do they. One further element of Judean identity previously raised, but which appears here again is the role of the high priest. The King orders a letter to be drafted to him in order to be able to transcribe the laws to the library in Alexandria. This reiterates the role of the Judean high priest as keeper of the documents of the law.

The associated story concerning the freeing of Judean captives returns in §12. The narrator again presents himself as a major force behind their liberation. As for aspects of identity, Aristeas points out the rather obvious fact that there is a real connection between the Judeans in Egypt and the homeland of Judea. The reason they do not live there is that they were taken from there by soldiers as booty and reduced to captivity. By the inclusion of this story Aristeas seems to imply that either the Judeans belong in their homeland, or that they should simply have closer ties to it. This significantly strengthens the process of territorialization by constantly reminding the audience of the Judeans being ripped from Judea, and not leaving on their own volition. §13 acknowledges that some of these were installed in military garrisons, and that other military strongholds of Judeans came under the Persians and Egyptians before them, but he again states that none of these were as numerous as those taken under Ptolemy I. At the same time as excusing these previous emigrations, the Letter of Aristeas maintains that these were all forced upon the Judean community by foreigners. The work seems to maintain that this is a condition that must be corrected, as can be seen in Aristeas' insistence on emancipation in §14-16.

As part of his arguments to Ptolemy II or the emancipation of the Judeans, Aristeas reminds the king (and the audience) that the law belongs to the whole Judean race in §15. He also points out that the Judean god, the overseer and creator of the universe is the same god whom the Macedonian Egyptians worship as Zeus. This second point has often been taken as a universalizing tendency in Aristeas, but it misses the point that the narrator has taken on a Hellenistic Macedonian persona. For the Hellenic and later Roman leaders it was no problem to accept the Judean god as long as they could

equate him with one of their own, as Antiochus IV did with Dionysus and Hadrian with Iupiter. From the true, Judean perspective of the author of Aristeas, the fact that the Judean deity is recognized as universal is also not problematic. Judeans worship only one god, who is universal; the outsiders may very well believe they worship the same god. This argument on the basis of a shared deity works on Philadelphus and he gives orders for the release of all the Judeans in Egypt, not only those who came with the army of his father, but also those who came before or after (§20). This emancipation of all Judeans signals not only a recognition of them as a defined population, but also opens up the possibility that they might be able to return to Judea. In his decree releasing the Judeans from captivity Philadelphus particularly points out that the devastation of the land, and the transport of the Judeans from the land are the worst offences. This again recalls that Judeans have a special attachment to the land of Judea.

Once this associated story is completed, the Letter of Aristeas again returns to the business of securing a translation and transcription of the Judean law. First Demetrius is ordered to create a memorial decree concerning the translation of the Judean books (§28) which are specified as the "books of the law of the Judeans" (τοῦ νόμου τῶν Ἰουδαίων βιβλία) (§30). He reiterates in this memorial that the books are in Hebrew characters and language. Demetrius also points out, for the first time that they are of divine origin, and thus are full of wisdom and perfect, which has kept writers from referring to them or those who live by them (§31). This introduces a whole new aspect of identity related to the books, and subsequently to the Judeans themselves. A mythology is passed on by Aristeas that claims that the books not only carry a special status themselves, being from the hand of God, but pass on that status to those who live the way of life described, because it is so sacred. This is a new and roundabout way of giving election to the Judeans. Election comes to them through the brilliance of the laws, which stem from God. It is by this mechanism that Aristeas puts the law in the center of his Judaism.

At the start of §32, the author again elucidates the role of the high priest. Previously the high priest has been acknowledged as someone who is honored among his people and identified as the possessor of the documents of the law. Here, Demetrius recommends to the king that a letter be sent to the high priest, which asks him to send six

elders of each tribe who are noble and experienced in the law in order to make a reliable translation. This request places the high priest at the head of the community for Aristeas. The fact that he is able to summon elders to be sent abroad signals this. Outside of the high priest's role in the public culture of the community, we are introduced to another facet of the organization of the community. The fact that there are tribes and elders of tribes introduces this new piece of information. Though the reference to tribes appears to be an archaism, it merely alludes to the mythic past by which the nation acquired its identity. More important is that the six members of each tribe means that the entirety of the nation is represented by the group requested. This should not be lost on the audience. A further element of the community identity comes with the first mention of Jerusalem and its association with the high priest. The fact that the high priest, who appears to be the leader of the nation, sits in Jerusalem, makes Jerusalem the definitive center of Judea, and the place to which Judeans are drawn. This represents a strengthening and refining of the process of territorialization.

The gifts sent to Eleazar in §33 are gifts between equal sovereigns and not of a king to his vassal[25]. This reminds the audience of Judean independence and of the role of the high priest at the head of the free state. The money sent to the temple for sacrifice also introduces another aspect of the public culture of Judea, the cult.

In his letter to Eleazar, Ptolemy recounts his act of liberation of the Judeans and the circumstances that preceded and necessitated it (§35-37). This repeats another aspect of Judean election and associates that election with autonomy. Ptolemy even goes so far as to call the Judeans living in Egypt "your citizens" (τοῖς σοῖς πολίταις), and treats them as free men with all the privileges offered to anyone. Again the second aspect of election is repeated: Ptolemy wishes to show his gratitude to the Judeans living in Egypt as well as the Judeans around the world by translating the books of the law from Hebrew into Greek so that they may be put into the library. It is made clear that this process is not only an honor, but is a signal of acceptance of the Judeans as a people by the highest secular authority.

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[25] Hadas *Aristeas*, 61.

Let us now examine how the evidence of the first 40 sections of Aristeas can be classified into the different processes that inform a community's identity. We will begin with the basic process of self-identification. This is obviously well developed. The community is called Judean on a number of occasions, and is never known by another title. The name signifies not only those who live in Judea, but also those living in Alexandria and other parts of the Diaspora for whatever reason (§15, 23, e.g.). The group is marked off both by a supposed ethnic link (§6, γένος) and by further markers. They also appear to be clearly distinguished from those living around them for various reasons (§11, 12, 22, 24). Thus, the group called Judean is a well-defined entity for the Letter of Aristeas.

When it comes to myth and memory cultivation and the community's use of deep cultural resources, such as the ideal golden age in the distant past, myths of election through covenant, and the means by which a community's relationship to their territory becomes sacred[26], the Letter of Aristeas is clearly less defined. While there is mention of Judean history in the text, it is solely bad. The Judeans were taken as conscripts in order to help Psammetichus' army against the Ethiopians, were taken by the Persians to aid against the Egyptians, and were taken as captives by the Ptolemies as booty for their soldiers (§13). These are hardly events in a golden age, and can hardly be drawn on as a means to excite the people's pride in their identity. There is also no mention of the covenant in these first sections of the letter. While it is clear that there is a homeland for the Judeans, there are no stories that relate how it became theirs which are retold in the letter. However, this does not mean that the Letter of Aristeas is totally devoid of myths and collective memory. The approach in these lines is simply different. As mentioned above, the law is placed at the center of the community, and is seen as divine (§31). This confers status on the law among the secular writers, but it also confers status on the Judean people who follow that law (§31). The people are elect among humanity because they follow the law in its highest form. The very reason for which Ptolemy and Demetrius are interested in them, and honor them, and emancipate them is the law. Thus, a new election myth is created. The law is not a duty placed on the Judeans because of

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[26] Smith "LSE", 582-589.

their election, but is the very reason for their election among the nations. The Letter of Aristeas has thus taken one "deep resource" of the community, that is the torah, and transformed it into the basis for the community's status. That being the case, there is still little relationship to history or the process by which Judea is made sacred in these lines.

Judea (§4, 12), also called "the land of the Judeans" (τῶν Ἰουδαίων χώραν) (§22) is certainly the geographical area associated with the Judeans. Though it is clear that not all Judeans inhabit that locale (§36, 38), their tie to it is repeatedly made manifest. The Judeans in Egypt are shown to have been forcibly removed from the land (§12), while other Judeans continually look back to it because of the high priest and the legal documents which are under his care (§3). Further, Judea is undoubtedly the place of authority concerning the law, not only in the person of the high priest, but throughout the people (§38-39). A secondary part of the territorialization of the community is the mention of Jerusalem, which is the center of the territory. One aspect of the process of territorialization that is not stressed is the boundaries. Though Judea is apparently separate from Coele-Syria, Phoenicia, and Egypt (§12), it is not clear where one ends and the other begins. Also, perhaps more importantly, it is not obvious whether Samaria, Galilee or Idumea are considered to be part of Judea. The concept of borders greatly distinguishes one concept of the homeland from another, and this is absent in the Letter of Aristeas.

The development (or rather recognition of) codes of communication among the Judean community is very strong in the first 40 sections of the Letter of Aristeas. It is mentioned no less than four times (§3, 11, 30, 38) that the Judean law is written in characters particular to the Judeans, and that the Judeans speak their own language. Further, it is especially stressed that the language is quite different from other languages previously thought to be similar (§11). The language is also compared to the native language used among the Egyptians. This recognition of the Judean ownership of the language separates the community and their texts from the outside. The separation is part of the community's identity, but it also holds them back from being part of the broader Hellenistic world. The translation of the law is meant as a way of welcoming the Judeans and their contributions into that world as equals (§38).

The final process of identity formation is the creation of public culture with recognizable laws and customs, as well as polity, religion, and rituals. This appears to be ubiquitous in the beginning of Aristeas, but is certainly confined to certain aspects of culture. First and foremost is obviously the law. As we have mentioned already, it is used a part of an election myth, and is the ostensible reason for the writing of the whole work in the first place. The Judean law is the ideal (§31). However, one should not lose sight of the fact that no details, other than physical specifications (written in Hebrew characters, in a peculiar language, on leather parchment) are communicated concerning the law in these first lines (later the law is indeed discussed in a symposium). There is no way of knowing how the law applies to the people, and whether it is employed as binding on the whole community. As for Judean polity, the high priest is evidently honored (§3) and in control of the documents of the law (§3). He also has the political power to receive and send delegations from other rulers (§39-40). Moreover, the high priest seems to control the temple and the coffers (§33). It is not out of line to propose that the high priest is seen as an absolute ruler along the lines of Ptolemy Philadelphus. In terms of customs, rituals, and religion, little is discussed in the beginning of the letter, though vast amounts of material are devoted to these discussions later on. From these first forty sections we learn only that there is a temple at which sacrifice takes place, and that the high priest is in charge of it (§40). Beyond this, it is not obvious what role religion plays in the letter of Aristeas.

Looking at these processes then from this view, we see that the community is quite well defined. It is known by a definite title- Judean. It is associated with a particular territory, Judea/land of the Judeans, wherein a large number of the population lives. The people speak a language peculiar to them, and have a developed written language with their own alphabet. They also have a recognizable and well-known law, which acts as the central reason for the community's election, as well as a central element of its public culture. We must concede that especially in the processes of myth and communal memory cultivation, territorialization, and the recognition of public culture, there is plenty of room for more definition, but part of this is simply due to the limited scope of the study. Overall, even with the limitations and shortcomings, the identity of the Judean community described is nothing short of a nation as Smith defines it. The

question which then arises is how widespread this concept was, and whether it was limited to the author of Aristeas, the Alexandrian community, Diaspora Judeans, or even extended into Judea itself. The answer will only come from extensive study of the texts of the period and the way they interpret Judean identity.