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PYTHAGORAS PALAESTINUS

Some time ago, in his study, "La légende de Pythagore de Grèce en Palestine", Lévy¹ drew some interesting parallels between Pythagoras and Pythagoreanism, on the one hand, and the Jews, including the *New Testament*², on the other, but failed to produce a convincing case³ that the Alexandrian Jews in fact knew Pythagoras or mentioned him in their writings or asserted that he had borrowed the main tenets of his philosophy from the *Pentateuch*. In the following it will be demonstrated not only that the Jews contended that Pythagoras had been inspired by the books of Moses because of the many resemblances between religion and his philosophy, but also that there existed a separate Hellenistic tradition linking Pythagoras with Palestine and endowing him with many Jewish traits. The present analysis of the sources will show that Lévy's basic thesis is correct: that the life or legend of Pythagoras (it is immaterial for the purpose of these arguments whether the Hellenistic biographies are fact or fiction) had extensive influence in Palestine. The main reason for this, overlooked by Lévy, is to be found in the tradition, independent of the Jews and early patristic authors, which associates Pythagoras with Palestine and invested both him and his philosophy with many characteristics which fortuitously also form part of the Jewish religion. This Jewish Pythagoras was so influential in Judaea in the last few centuries B.C. and the first century A.D. that, according to Josephus, the Essenes, one of the three principal religious sects of Hellenistic Jewry, consciously adopted the way of life of Pythagoras:

... οἱ παρ' ἡμῖν Ἑσσαῖοι καλούμενοι. γένος δὲ τοῦτ' ἐστὶ διαίτη χρώμενον τῇ παρ' Ἑλλήσιν ὑπὸ Πυθαγόρου καταδεδειγμένη⁴.

¹ Paris 1927. Lévy's work has most recently been described by Philip (Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism, Toronto 1966, 196, n. 3): "Lévy's studies leave considerations of historical fact on one side and sometimes overstate their thesis, especially in suggesting that Pythagoras is the prototype of Jesus."

² Lévy, op. cit., 295-331. Biggs (The Christian Platonists of Alexandria, Oxford 1886, 242 to 243) had already written: "If Christ was Son of God, so were Plato, Pythagoras, Apollonius. If Christ wrought signs and wonders, Pythagoras also caused a miraculous draught of fishes and fasted for forty days ... If Christ taught in parables, so too did Pythagoras. It was Pythagoras who first proclaimed the golden rule 'thou shalt love thy friend as thyself', ..."

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Since Josephus himself had been an Essene in his youth⁵, this statement must be based on a personal knowledge of the Essenes and not some suppositious comparison between Pythagoreanism and Essenism; that is, Josephus must have been aware and was probably told that the founder of the reformed Pythagorean Essenism, the Teacher of Righteousness⁶, had knowingly employed (χρώμενον) the way of life of Pythagoras (διαίτη, not 'diet')⁷ which he must have learnt about from the writings of Hellenistic Jews and of Pythagoreans who have handed down to us the Jewish Pythagoras, the prototype of the Teacher of Righteousness.

The earliest attested contact between Alexandrian Jewry and Greek philosophy is the commentary on the *Pentateuch* of Aristoboulos who flourished in Alexandria in the second half of the second century B.C.⁸ and dedicated his book to Ptolemy Philometor (181-146 B.C.), but Clement also describes him as being born under Ptolemy Philadelphos⁹. He was also (falsely) identified with the Aristoboulos of the second book of Maccabees¹⁰. According to Clement¹¹, Aristoboulos,

of whose library were discovered in 1947 near the Dead Sea. Literature on this subject includes observations such as the following: "The Teacher of Righteousness was, to put it boldly, a kind of Jewish Pythagoras ..." (Dupont-Sommer, op. cit., 162). "The Galilean Master, as He is presented to us in the writings of the New Testament, appears in many respects as an astonishing reincarnation of the Master of Justice." (A. Dupont-Sommer, The Dead Sea Scrolls, Oxford 1952, 99) "There is, therefore, no doubt that in the eyes of the faithful (ie. the Essenes) the crucified Teacher (i.e. of Righteousness), the 'exalted man', was a reincarnation of Joshua, son of Nun, known in the Greek texts as Jesus." (J. M. Allegro, The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Christian Myth, Newton Abbot 1979, 82) Dupont-Sommer (The Dead Sea Scrolls, op. cit., 8) dates the passion and death of the Master about April 65-63 B.C.

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in the first book of his commentary dedicated to Philometor, stated that Pythagoras borrowed many of his philosophical ideas from Jewish sources: ... καθὼς καὶ Πυθαγόρας πολλὰ τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν μετενέγκας εἰς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ δογματοποιῶν. The idea behind μετενέγκας here, the usual Hellenistic form of the aorist participle (cf. ἐνέγκας *Acts* 5,2; and 2 *Macc.* 7,27), is that of a transfer and appropriation of Jewish thoughts on Pythagoras' part, not that of an actual translation, for Aristoboulos assumed the existence of a pre-Septuagint Greek translation of the books of Moses¹² which, according to Aristoboulos, Pythagoras apparently consulted so that the τῶν παρ' ἡμῖν naturally refers to the *Pentateuch* and could be supplemented by νομίμων. Although Aristoboulos does not specify the Jewish dogmas borrowed by Pythagoras, one can supply from other sources a list of possible influences on Pythagoras by the books of Moses, according to Alexandrian Jewry.

Hermippos, another Alexandrian who flourished in the third century B.C. and may have been one of Aristoboulos' sources for his contention that Pythagoras copied Jewish ideas, gives a list of the latter purportedly present in the philosophy of Pythagoras:

Ἑρμιππος ἀνὴρ περὶ πᾶσαν ἱστορίαν ἐπιμελής. λέγει τοίνυν ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ τῶν Περὶ Πυθαγόραν βιβλίων (F.Gr.H. III 41, fr. 21) ὅτι Πυθαγόρας ἐνὸς αὐτοῦ τῶν συνουσιαστῶν τελευτήσαντος τοῦνομα Καλλιφῶντος τὸ γένος Κροτωνιάτου τὴν ἐκείνου ψυχὴν ἔλεγε συνδιατρίβειν αὐτῷ καὶ νύκτωρ καὶ παθ' ἡμέραν· καὶ ὅτι παρεκελεύετο μὴ διέρχεσθαι τόπον ἐφ' ὃν ὄνος ὀκλάσῃ, καὶ τῶν διψίων ὑδάτων ἀπέχεσθαι καὶ πάσης ἀπέχειν βλασφημίας. εἴτα προστίθῃσι μετὰ ταῦτα καὶ τάδε· «ταῦτα δὲ ἔπραττεν καὶ ἔλεγε τὰς Ἰουδαίων καὶ Θρακῶν δόξας μιμούμενος καὶ μεταφέρων εἰς ἑαυτόν». λέγεται γὰρ ὡς ἀληθῶς ὁ ἀνὴρ ἐκεῖνος πολλὰ τῶν παρὰ Ἰουδαίοις νομίμων εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ μετενεγκεῖν φιλοσοφίαν¹³.

The words in quotation marks are the ipsissima verba of Hermippos whom Josephus is quoting here, the last sentence being an explanation by Josephus. The subject of παρεκελεύετο is Pythagoras¹⁴ so that the three Pythagorean doctrines reported by Hermippos are allegedly original beliefs held by the master who borrowed them from the Jews and the Thracians, the latter being omitted in the following discussion. The information that Pythagoras adopted these doctrines from the *Pentateuch* (νομίμων) is an assumption of Josephus who is apparently basing himself on other external sources, perhaps including Aristoboulos.

The first thing that strikes the reader of this passage is the verbal similarity between it and the Aristoboulos' quotation cited above for both Hermippos and

¹² Gercke, R.E., 918.

¹³ Josephus, c. *Ap.* I 163. I am quoting from M. T. Cardini, *Pitagorici. Testimonianze e Frammenti*, Vol. 1, Florence 1958, 108–110. In a parallel passage derived from Origen, ap. Cardini, op. cit., 110–111, Hermippos states the same thing: Λέγεται δὲ καὶ Ἑρμιππος ἐν τῷ πρώτῳ Περὶ νομοθετῶν ἱστορηκεῖναι Πυθαγόραν τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φιλοσοφίαν ἀπὸ Ἰουδαίων εἰς Ἑλλήνας ἀγαγεῖν. The Josephus passage is also to be found in Diels-Kranz, *Vor.* Vol. 1, 111,1.

¹⁴ This is also the interpretation of Cardini, op. cit., 109.

Aristoboulos employ the verb μεταφέρω to describe Pythagoras' borrowings from Jewish thought. If there is any dependence, then it is more likely to be a case of Aristoboulos being influenced by Hermippos than vice versa, although Zeller believed that Hermippos had derived his information from Aristoboulos¹⁵. It is extremely unlikely that Hermippos read the Septuagint and improbable that he took the trouble of investigating obscure Jewish beliefs and practices, so that there remains only the likelihood that he consulted Jewish authors earlier than Aristoboulos who also claimed that Pythagoras had borrowed many of his ideas from the *Pentateuch*. It is more plausible to argue that Josephus had read Aristoboulos because in the last line of the above quotation there are two similarities to Aristoboulos: πολλά and μετενεγκεῖν¹⁶, indicating that Josephus is paraphrasing Aristoboulos. Thus one can still argue that Hermippos is basing himself on Alexandrian Jews and can be legitimately employed as a source for reconstructing the Jewish Pythagoras of Aristoboulos and Hellenistic Jewry in general. In any case, in Hermippos we have the first historical evidence of a Pythagoras consciously imitating the Jews. This Jewish Pythagoras in turn became the model and archetype of later Jewish religious movements such as the Essenes. Of course this Jewish Pythagoras is a complete fiction of Hellenistic Jewry which passed into the satirist Hermippos' works who probably made good use of Pythagoras' Jewish antecedents in his attempt to denigrate the sage¹⁷. The similarities between Pythagoras' philosophy and the Jewish religion noticed by the Alexandrian Jews prior to Hermippos were purely fortuitous, but later were the result of a conscious imitation by the Essenes who took Pythagoras as their model, as Josephus informs us.

The first case of imitation of Jews on Pythagoras' part according to Hermippos is the prohibition against passing a place upon which an ass has defecated (this is the obscure meaning, neither in Cardini nor in L.S.J., of ὀκλάση, as shall become apparent presently). This taboo has all the characteristics of a Pythagorean 'akousma', an enigmatic saying often attributed to Pythagoras himself¹⁸, which is consonant with the fact that Hermippos puts these taboos into the mouth of Pythagoras, as was observed above. To these conundrums later generations and

¹⁵ Cf. E. Zeller, *Hist. Gk. Phil.*, London 1881, Vol. 1, 330, n. 1: "If even these authors derived their statements from Aristoboulos, it is not certain that Hermippos really expressed himself thus; but supposing he did so, it would only prove that this Alexandrian sage, of the early part of the second century before Christ, had found the assertion among the Alexandrian Jews, and believed it; ..." One cannot disagree with the last assertion, albeit Zeller dates Aristoboulos too early and Hermippos too late.

¹⁶ Josephus is here using the Attic form instead of the Hellenistic μετενεγκεῖν which Aristoboulos would have employed. The Hellenistic language of Aristoboulos' fragments of course supports their authenticity.

¹⁷ For an intelligent discussion of Hermippos the satirist and Pythagoras, cf. I. Lévy, *Recherches sur les sources de la légende de Pythagore*, Paris 1926, 37—39.

¹⁸ Cf. Iamblichus, *VP*. 82, 47 (Deubner); and for a discussion of further Pythagorean taboos, cf. M. Marcovich, *Pythagorica*, *Philologus* 108, 1964, 29f.

such commentators as Aristotle¹⁹ added rational explanations. However, this particular taboo about the ass does not appear in any of the traditional lists of akousmata bequeathed to us by antiquity. Aelian fortunately provides us with an explanation of this Pythagorean aversion to the ass, stating that the Pythagoreans loathed the ass for a number of reasons: firstly, it defecates towards the east, offending the sun in the process; that it is deaf to harmony; and, finally, perhaps that it is dear to Typhon, the Egyptian god Seth, the evil demon, although this last statement may not in fact be attributed to the Pythagoreans:

λέγουσι δὲ οἱ Πυθαγόρειοι ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὄνου καὶ ἐκεῖνο (ie. the ass defecates towards the east, according to the Egyptians), μόνον τοῦτον τῶν ζώων μὴ γεγονέναι κατὰ ἁρμονίαν· ταύτῃ τοι καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἥχον τὸν τῆς λύρας εἶναι κωφότατον. ἤδη δὲ αὐτόν τινες καὶ τῷ Τυφῶνι προσφιλεῖ γεγονέναι φασί²⁰.

The first reason alleged by the Pythagoreans for their detestation of the ass, in agreement with the Egyptians, is the ass's insulting behaviour towards the sun, relieving itself in a easterly direction, the position of sunrise. Now this agrees with Hermippos' assertion that Pythagoras bade his followers eschew a place on which an ass has voided itself (ie. τόπον ἐφ' ὃν ὄνος ὀκλάσῃ), a ban which was supposed to be common to the Jews as well, if Pythagoras is imitating them, as Hermippos says. Now in the *Pentateuch* there are no really slighting references to asses, save perhaps for the injunction that an ass and a horse should not draw a plough together (*Deut.* 2,10). However, in Josephus one finds the Essenes practising a reverence for the sun to such an extent that they carry around a little hoe to dig a hole for their excreta so that they might not offend the rays of the sun:

ταῖς δὲ ἄλλαις ἡμέραις βόθρον ὀρύσσοντες βάθος ποδιαῖον τῇ σκαλίδι (τοιοῦτον γὰρ ἐστὶ τὸ διδόμενον ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἀξινίδιον τοῖς νεοσυστάτοις) καὶ περικαλύψαντες θοιμάτιον, ὥς μὴ τὰς αὐγὰς ὑβρίζοιεν τοῦ θεοῦ, θακεύουσιν εἰς αὐτόν, ἔπειτα τὴν ἀνορυχθεῖσαν γῆν ἐφέλκουσιν εἰς τὸν βόθρον²¹.

Since the ass so impudently defiled the rays of the sun god, the Essenes would have regarded this animal in true Pythagorean fashion with extreme contempt. In any case, the Pythagoreans had an akousma²² which forbade urination when turned towards the sun (πρὸς ἥλιον), a phrase that undoubtedly means 'towards the east', a common enough Homeric meaning, as LSJ. testifies. So too in the above passage the Essenes dug pits and squatted over them, shrouding themselves in their cloaks²³. Granted that the Qumran sect of the Essenes was in existence

¹⁹ Aristotle, *Fr. Sel. ed. Ross.* 134—136 (Frs. 5—7). On akousmata in general, cf. C. Hoelk, *De acusmatis sive symbolis Pythagoricis*, diss. phil. 1894.

²⁰ Aelian, *N.A.* X 28.

²¹ Josephus, *B.J.* II 8,9. One of these hoes was found in a cave at Qumran, cf. J. Allegro, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, op. cit., 118.

²² Iamblichus, *Protrep.*, 106,18 (Pistelli): πρὸς ἥλιον τετραμμένος μὴ οὔρει.

²³ Lévy, *La légende*, op. cit., 277 discusses this passage of Josephus and the similarities between the Essenes and the Pythagoreans. Although much work remains to be done on the rela-

in the second century B.C.; and perhaps in Hermippos' and Aristoboulos' time the Therapeutae lived on the shores of Lake Maria outside Alexandria, as described by Philo in the *De vita contemplativa*, the ass may have been despised by certain elements of Alexandrian Jewry for precisely the same reason as the Pythagoreans, although this Jewish animosity towards the ass did not find expression in the *Pentateuch*.

However, in other sources one finds the ass playing a prominent role in Jewish religious beliefs and history, perhaps as seen through gentile eyes. For example, Plutarch in the *De Iside et Osiride*²⁴ tells us the following story:

οἱ δὲ λέγοντες ἐκ τῆς μάχης (ie. between Horus, Osiris' son, and Typhon or Seth) ἐπ' ὄνον τῷ Τυφῶνι τὴν φυγὴν ἐπτα ἡμέρας γενέσθαι καὶ σωθέντα γεννῆσαι παῖδας Ἱεροσόλυμον καὶ Ἰουδαῖον, αὐτόθεν εἰσεὶ κατάδηλοι τὰ Ἰουδαϊκὰ παρέλκοντες εἰς τὸν μῦθον.

Like Aelian, Plutarch stresses that the ass is a Typhonic animal, a creature of evil; and hence arises its close association with the Jews, insomuch that Tacitus²⁵ affirms that an image of an ass was erected in the temple at Jerusalem, revealing that this theme was anti-semitic and no doubt appealed to the satirist Hermippos for just that reason.

The second of Pythagoras' injunctions to the shade of Kalliphon, according to Hermippos, concerns the abstention from the drinking of waters causing thirst (διψίων ὕδατων) or, as Cardini²⁶ renders διψίων, equating it with σηπτῶν, putrid or stagnant waters, which in the absence of any discussion by her of the three Pythagorean prohibitions and their relation to Judaism must remain an isolated conjecture, not supported by LSJ. Now in the *Pentateuch* one finds no reference to a ban on the drinking of such water, either that which causes thirst or the stagnant variety, so that Hermippos must have had some other Jewish tradition in mind; perhaps that of the herd of asses showing Moses the way to the spring, as narrated by Tacitus:

... cum grex asinorum agrestium e pastu in rupem nemore opacam concessit. secutus Moyses coniectura herbidi soli largas aquarum venas aperit²⁷.

The second prohibition would thus be connected with the first. However, in the *Pentateuch*, notably at *Gen.* 26,19, the LXX speaks of ὕδατος ζῶντος, an

tionship between the Qumran sect and Pythagoras a beginning has been attempted by M. Hadas, *Hellenistic Culture*, 193—199.

²⁴ *De Iside et Osiride*, 31. Cf. T. Hopfner, *Ueber Isis und Osiris*, Vol. 2, Darmstadt 1967 (reprint), 143—146 for an excellent commentary. Among other things, the ass was indirectly responsible for Moses finding water in the desert cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* V 3, 10f. An alternative ancestry for the Jews, Juda and Idumaea, is traced by Alexander Polyhistor, ap. Jacoby, *F Gr Hist* Vol. 3a, 122—3, back to Semiramis, queen of Babylon.

²⁵ *Hist.* V 4, 4—5.

²⁶ Cardini, op. cit., 110.

²⁷ *Hist.* V 3, 12—14.

epithet of ten applied to spring-water; and this term ζῶν may be being contrasted by Hermippos with διψίων in the sense of σηπτῶν. It is also interesting to notice in this context that Jesus at the well with the Samaritan woman mentions ὕδωρ ζῶν and says of Jacob's well-water: Πᾶς ὁ πίνων ἐκ τοῦ ὕδατος τούτου διψήσει πάντῃ²⁸.

The third of Pythagoras' admonitions to Kalliphon's revenant, according to Hermippos, is more straightforward and has a parallel in the decalogue: οὐ λήμψῃ τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ σου ἐπὶ ματαίῳ ... (*Deut.* 5,11) This injunction against blasphemy is similar to Pythagoras', which other sources also mention²⁹. Admittedly, then, the only real parallel between the three commandments of Pythagoras and the *Pentateuch* lies in this third one, but Hermippos with the other two may have been referring to sectarian Jewish thought or may simply have been satirising the Jews with anti-semitic propagands.

In a broader context Aristoboulos' and Hermippos' contention that Pythagoras had borrowed from the Jews, especially the *Pentateuch*, may have been founded on other similarities between the rules of Pythagoras and the commandments of Moses. Take, for example, the Mosaic ban on eating carcasses in general and those of forbidden, unclean animals: πᾶν θνησιμαῖον οὐ φάγεσθε (*Deut.* 14,21). Now this obviously sounds like Pythagoras' dietary regulation against the eating of dead animals, dead by natural causes and not slaughtered, as reported by Aristotle³⁰: ... καὶ ἀπέχεσθαι βρωτῶν θνησιδίων τε κρεῶν ... Another similarity between the books of Moses and Pythagoras, as cited by Clement of Alexandria, may also be ultimately derived from Aristoboulos. Clement³¹ claims that Pythagoras borrowed his gentle attitude towards animals from the law of Moses, quoting a paraphrase of *Deuteronomy* and *Leviticus*³². Similarly, since circumcision was an integral part of the Mosaic law (cf. *Gen.* 17,10), one also finds stories in the legend of Pythagoras narrating that the sage was circumcised, not by the Jews, it is true, but by the Egyptian priests who initiated him into their occult rites:

... καθάπερ καὶ ὁ Πυθαγόρας αὐτοῖς γε τούτοις (ie. Αἰγυπτίοις) δι' οὗς καὶ περιετέμετο, ἵνα δὴ καὶ εἰς τὰ ἄδυστα κατελθὼν, τὴν μυστικὴν παρ' Αἰγυπτίων ἐκμάθοι φιλοσοφίαν ...³³.

²⁸ John, 4,13.

²⁹ Cf. Aristotle, *Fr. Sel. ed. Ross*, 134, *Fr.* 5: ... θεοῖς ἀεὶ μετ' εὐφημίας ... Iamblichus, *VP.* 55, 30 (Deubner): ... κατὰ πάντα τὸν βίον αὐτάς τε εὐφημεῖν ... *ibid.* 149, 84 (Deubner): ἐχρῆτο δὲ καὶ εὐφημίᾳ πρὸς τοὺς κρείττονας ... cf. also Iamb., *VP.* 100, 57–58 (Deubner), this last passage having also an interesting parallel with the Mosaic commandment concerning honouring one's parents.

³⁰ Aristotle, *Fr. Sel. ed. Ross*, 130, *Fr.* 5.

³¹ Clem. Alex., *Strom.* II 18, col. 1032 (Migne). For Pythagoras' gentle attitude to animals, cf. Iamblichus, *VP.* 99, a passage ultimately derived from Aristoxenus, cf. Rohde, *Kleine Schriften*, II, 142.

³² Cf. *Deut.* 14,21; 22,6 & 7; *Lev.* 2,2,27–8 et pass.

³³ *Strom.* I 15, col. 768 (Migne); cf. also Theodoretus, *P.G.* 83, col. 793; and Lucian, *Somn.* 18, ed. Macleod, Vol. 1, Oxford 1972, 264.

Of course, circumcision was a common custom among the Egyptians, not only the priests, but even the pharaoh³⁴. Clement here does not name his sources, but since he alludes elsewhere to mainly Hellenistic authors such as Neanthes, Aristoxenus, Didymos, and Theopompos on the Pythagoras' legend³⁵, one can be fairly certain that it was an author earlier than Antonius Diogenes, the chief authority for Porphyry's account of Pythagoras' journey to Egypt³⁶. Aristoboulos and other Hellenistic Jews may have read about this circumcision in Neanthes or Aristoxenus and decided that Pythagoras was indeed an honorary Jew.

Moreover, Pythagoras was not only known as a borrower from the Mosaic law to both Alexandrian Jews and Greeks of the pre-Christian era, but also as a native of Syria who had sojourned in Phoenicia and lived the life of an anchorite and prophet, like Elijah, atop Mt. Carmel in Palestine so that once again the Essenes who took him for their model would have been pleased to discover a Pythagoras who was not only a Samian or Etruscan, but also a Phoenician who had dwelt amongst them in the promised land. This element in the Pythagoras' legend comes to the fore in the works of Neanthes of Kyzikos, writing in the third century B.C., who stated that Pythagoras' father, Mnesarchos, was by birth a Syrian from the Phoenician coastal town of Tyre³⁷. Mnesarchos became an honorary citizen of Samos after he had replenished the starving island with corn during a famine. Later Mnesarchos took Pythagoras back to Tyre where he was put to school with the Chaldaeans³⁸. Likewise, in Iamblichus³⁹ narrative of the events of Pythagoras' early life the levant figures prominently for it is in Sidon, the Phoenician city, that Parthenis, now dubbed Pythais, mother of the sage, is delivered of the wondrous child foretold by the Delphian oracle. Later, when Pythagoras visits Sidon during his early travels, he remembers that it is his native land by nature (... ἐξέπλευσεν εἰς τὴν Σιδόνα, φύσει τε αὐτοῦ πατρίδα ...).

³⁴ The mummies of pharaohs were circumcised, cf. O. Neubert, *The Valley of the Kings*, London 1957, 241.

³⁵ *Strom.* I 15.

³⁶ Porphyry, *VP.* 10–19, attributed to Antonius Diogenes, who also has Pythagoras associate with the Hebrews, *VP.* 11, by Rohde, *op. cit.*, 115. Diogenes Laertius (VIII 3) cites Antiphon for Pythagoras' Egyptian journey, but already Isocrates, *Bus.* 28 had alluded to Pythagoras' association with the Egyptian priests. There is no need to accept Philip's sceptical view of Isocrates' testimony: 'Isocrates later (12,33) practically concedes that this (ie. Pythagoras' sojourn in Egypt) is invention, but if it was intended as fiction it was accepted as fact.' (Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism, *op. cit.*, 190). Actually, Isocrates at 12,33 does not mention Pythagoras or his journey to Egypt; and the passage coming so long after the discussion of Pythagoras obviously does not refer to it. According to Philon of Alexandria (cf. *De spec. leg.*, 2–3, Vol. 5, Cohn) there were four main reasons why the Egyptian priests practised circumcision; and Philon associates the practice with Platonism and perhaps even Pythagoras. Herodotus (II 36) informs us that all male Egyptians are circumcised, for cleanliness' sake (37).

³⁷ Porphyry, *VP.* 1: ... Νεάνθης δ' ἐν τῷ πέμπτῳ τῶν μυθικῶν (Πυθαγορικῶν, according to Jacoby, *F Gr Hist*, Vol. IIa, Berlin 1926, 197) Σύρον ἐκ Τύρου τῆς Συρίας.

³⁸ Porphyry, *VP.* 1; cf. comments of Levy, *La legende*, *op. cit.*, 6, n. 7.

³⁹ Iamblichus, *VP.* 7–13, 7–10 (Deubner).

It is extremely difficult to pinpoint the source for these references to Sidon, Phoenicia, and Palestine which play such a large role in Iamblichus' version of Pythagoras' birth, childhood, and journies. *Communis opinio* has it that Iamblichus is here basing himself on the biography of Pythagoras allegedly composed by Apollonius of Tyana in the first century A.D.⁴⁰ At this stage it matters little about the ultimate source because the important thing remains that Hellenistic traditions associated Pythagoras very closely with the Levant and Palestine in particular for not only was he born in Sidon of a Tyrian father, according to Neanthes and Iamblichus' source which may after all be Neanthes⁴¹, at least for those details connecting him with Syria and Palestine; but also Pythagoras received his early education among the Syrian sages, the Chaldaeans⁴², and later visited the coastal cities of Tyre, Byblos, and Sidon in order to be initiated into the Phoenician religious mysteries⁴³.

Iamblichus in a curious passage⁴⁴ then has his hero live the life of a monk atop the Galilaean mountain Carmel, chiefly in the sacred place (ἱερόν)⁴⁵ which, we learn

⁴⁰ Lévy, *La légende*, op. cit., 5ff.; Burkert, *Weisheit und Wissenschaft*, Nurnberg 1962, 88, both accept Apollonius of Tyana as Iamblichus' source. According to Rohde (op. cit., 127), sections 2–24 of Iamblichus belong to Apollonius. This is based on the fact that Porphyry cites a certain Apollonius as his source for the name of Pythagoras' mother Pythais (*VP*. 2), a descendant of Ancaeus, a story also to be found in Iamblichus (*VP*. 3–4). Usually, however, Porphyry refers to Apollonius of Tyana with the epithet Τυανεύς (cf. *De abst.* III 3), and Nauck himself does not equate the Apollonius of Porphyry's life of Pythagoras with the Tyanacan (cf. Nauck's index to the *Opuscula Selecta*, 127). Of course, neither Iamblichus nor Porphyry in their lives of Pythagoras specify that the Apollonius to whom they are referring is the Tyanacan. Likewise, J. Carcopino (*La basilique pythagoricienne*, Paris 1927, 168) attributes the first seven sections of Iamblichus' biography to Apollonius Tyrius, the Hellenistic author of a pinax of Stoic philosophers and works who may well have written on Pythagoras as well; while Kothe, Delatte, Rostagni, and Bertermann, (ap. K. von Fritz, *Pythagorean Politics in Southern Italy*, New York 1940, 47) assign Iamblichus, *VP*. 11–19 to Timaeus. According to the *Suda* (ed. Bernhardt, Vol. 1, 623–624), whose only authority for Apollonius is the late biography of Philostratus, Apollonius of Tyana composed a Πυθαγόρου βίος, but this may be mere guesswork based on the extensive references to Pythagoras and his philosophy in the biography by Philostratus. Moreover, in the only sections in Iamblichus attributed to an Apollonius by name (*VP*. 254–264) one encounters such gross Hellenistic forms as συναγωγῶν (254) or εὑρασθαι (255), whereas Philostratus informs us that Apollonius of Tyana spoke pure Attic (cf. *Vit. Apoll.* I 7); and *VP*. 257 with its προσῆπον, referring to Apollonius, not Iamblichus, shows that the latter is quoting this Apollonius verbatim and not paraphrasing him so that the Hellenistic forms are not due to Iamblichus.

⁴¹ Neanthes is quoted by Iamblichus in section 189.

⁴² Porphyry, *VP*. 1. The Chaldaeans, according to Iamblichus (*De comm. math. sc.*, 21) were the mathematicians of the Syrians.

⁴³ *VP*. 13–14.

⁴⁴ *VP*. 44.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* If the word means 'temple', then the source was unfamiliar with Palestine and its traditions for there was only an altar on Carmel, cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* II 78: *Est Iudaeam inter Suriamque Carmelus: ita vocant montem deumque. Nec simulacrum deo aut templum (sic tradidere maiores) ara tantum et reverentia.*

from other sources⁴⁶, was sacred to the deity called Carmelus. After Pythagoras' education at the hands of Thales, Iamblichus describes the sojourn on Carmel leading to his visit to Egypt:

... διεπορθεύθη ἀμελλητὶ ὑπὸ τινων Αἰγυπτίων πορθεύων καιριώτατα προσορμισάντων τοῖς ὑπὸ Κάρμηλον τὸ Φοινικικὸν ὄρος αἰγιαλοῖς, ἔνθα ἐμόναζε τὰ πολλὰ ὁ Πυθαγόρας κατὰ τὸ ἱερόν ...

There are two striking elements in this passage which are useful for determining a source for Iamblichus' narrative at this point. Firstly, there is the epithet Φοινικικόν for Carmel, which implies that the mountain is not in Palestine; and secondly, there is the word ἱερόν, possibly meaning 'holy place', not 'temple', if Iamblichus' source had a precise knowledge of Carmel for we know that there was no temple atop Carmel, neither in Pythagoras' nor Apollonius of Tyana's (if he in fact is behind the words of Iamblichus) nor in Iamblichus' time, but only an altar, the site of the oracle of the god Carmelus. The designation of Carmel as being 'Phoenician' could not come from Iamblichus because in his day the border between Phoenicia and Palestine was to the north of Carmel which to all intents and purposes was part of Palestine and more particularly, of Galilee, especially in the first century A.D., although for a brief period Carmel was under the suzerainty of Tyre⁴⁷. Both the imprecision of the epithet 'Phoenician' and the vagueness or even erroneousness of the term ἱερόν indicate that the source was not very familiar with the geography of Palestine and Syria and could very well prove that a Hellenistic author like Neanthes is here being used by Iamblichus who was himself a Syrian and so quite familiar with the local topography. It seems inconceivable that Apollonius of Tyana, to judge from the anti-semitic tenour of his attitude toward the Jews⁴⁸, who would moreover not even enter Judaea because he considered it polluted by the inhabitants, should have his hero Pythagoras live on top of a Jewish mountain, the site of one of the most important events in Jewish history, the slaying of the prophets of Baal by Elijah (I *Kings* 18,40f.; LXX, *Regn.* III⁴⁹ 18,40f.) who had assembled them on ὄρος τὸ Καρμήλιον (*Regn.* III 18,19). In fact, Pythagoras' life as an anchorite on Carmel recalls Elijah's vigil on the mountain waiting for a sign from the sea (*Regn.* III 18,42f.), although it is obvious that Iamblichus' source is not copying the Septuagint. Moreover, Elijah behaves on the mountain much as Pythagoras would have, commanding

⁴⁶ Cf. Suetonius, *Vesp.* 5,6; Tacitus, *Hist.* II 78; Dio LXVI 1; Skylax, *Periplus*, 42. and the comments of Mooney, C. Suetoni Tranquilli De Vita Caesarum, New York, London, Toronto 1930, 400.

⁴⁷ Josephus, *B.J.* III 3,1.

⁴⁸ *Vit. Apoll.* V 27, where Philostratus describes Apollonius' detestation of the Jews who were, according to him, polluting Palestine. Cf. also V 33.

⁴⁹ It is not impossible that the transfiguration of Jesus, according to the Gospels, took place on Carmel (cf. *Matt.* 17, 1 ff.) for Jesus was at Tyre just before this incident is recorded by the Synoptics. Elijah, of course, appeared alongside Jesus during the transfiguration.

the slave to turn seven times⁵⁰ before the miraculous cloud of rain came. If, as seems likely, this story of Pythagoras alone on Mt. Carmel was current in Alexandria in Hellenistic times, then the Jews would once again have found a reason for taking Pythagoras as a model for he had acted very much like Elijah on the sacred mountain⁵¹. Iamblichus' source goes on to give a novel twist to Pythagoras' sojourn on Carmel by having the Egyptian sailors take him for the incarnate deity Carmelus himself⁵². In some respects too the author of this incident possesses accurate geographical knowledge for the beach mentioned at Iamblichus, *VP*. 14 (... τοῖς ὑπὸ Κάρμηλον τὸ Φοινικικὸν ὄρος αἰγιαλοῖς ...) is obviously the gulf of Haifa⁵³.

This was not the only occasion on which Pythagoras was associated with a Jewish prophet for, according to Clement of Alexandria⁵⁴, Pythagoras' Assyrian teacher Nazaratus was identified by some commentators as the prophet Ezekiel:

Ἀλέξανδρος δὲ ἐν τῷ Περὶ Πυθαγορικῶν συμβόλων Ναζαράτῳ τῷ Ἀσσυρίῳ μαθητεύσαι ἱστορεῖ τὸν Πυθαγόραν (Ἰεζεκιήλ τοῦτον ἡγοῦνται τινες, οὐκ ἔστι δέ, ὡς ἐπειτα δηλωθήσεται ...)

We do not know who the τινες are, but considering Clement's relatively early date in the history of Christian literature it is not unreasonable to suggest that Alexandrian Jews as well as Christians identified the Nazaratus with Ezekiel.

⁵⁰ Seven, of course, was sacred to Pythagoras, cf. Apuleius, *Met.* XI 2.

⁵¹ Lévy, *La légende*. op. cit., 302, compares Pythagoras' vigil atop Carmel with Christ's solitary prayer in the desert.

⁵² Iamblichus, *VP*. 16, 11 (Deubner).

⁵³ Cf. W. Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography*, Vol. 1, London 1890, 321.

⁵⁴ *Strom.* I 15, ap. C. Mueller, *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, Vol. 3, 239. Bidez and Cumont (*Les mages hellénisés*, Vol. 2, Paris 1928, 36) amend Ναζαράτῳ to Ζαράτῳ, in their belief that Zoroaster is meant, but this is mistaken, as shall be demonstrated above.

Moreover, I believe that the original reading in Clement here was Ναζαράτῳ not Ναζαράτῳ, the tau having been substituted for the iota by mediaeval scribes on the analogy of Zaratos. I have quoted Mueller's text above because Jacoby in his *F Gr Hist* Vol. 3a, Fr. 94, 118 follows Bidez and Cumont, reading Ζαράτῳ. Jacoby (*F Gr Hist* Vol. 3, Komm., 296) thinks that the identification of Zaratas with Ezekiel is due solely to Clement of Alexandria (but why the τινες; and why does Clement repudiate the identification?). Likewise, Jacoby (*ibid.*, commenting on Fr. 79 of Polyhistor's) believes that Pythagoras living under a successor of Sennacherib is derived from Eusebios, not from Berosos, Polyhistor's source (cf. also W. Burkert, *Lore and Science in Ancient Pythagoreanism*, 111, n. 6) although Jacoby has not taken into account Polyhistor's use (Fr. 94) of the term 'Assyrian' as applied to Nazaraïos (Ἀσσυρίῳ) which literally means a member of the race ruled by Sennacherib and his successors. The most telling objection to Eusebios being behind this association of Pythagoras with the Assyrian kings in the seventh century B.C. is the fact that elsewhere in his *Chronicle* (P.L. 19, col. 467 and col. 471) Eusebios places Pythagoras' acme in the sixty second Olympiad (c. 540 B.C.), the traditional date of Aristoxenus, Pythagoras' death occurring in the seventy first Olympiad (493 B.C.; while, according to Apollodoros, Pythagoras died in the seventieth Olympiad, cf. Jacoby, *Apollodoros Chronik*, 218). If he had really believed that Pythagoras lived in the seventh century, why did he give his floruit as the sixty second Olympiad? Therefore, it seems likely that Alexander to Polyhistor, ap. Eusebios, supports the notion that Nazaraïos was an Assyrian, not a sixth century Persian, Zaratos.

The reason for this is fairly obvious: the form of the name Nazaratus sounds like the Chaldee-Hebrew 'nazir'⁵⁵ [נזיר], a verb meaning to withdraw from society, like a prophet or anchorite; and it is infact used to refer to ascetic solitaries with the usual unkempt appearance called Nazirites (נזירי). The word later became known to Christians in the form Ναζωραῖος or Ναζαρηνός, the former being interpreted as meaning both Nazarene and Nazarite⁵⁶, both being epithets of Jesus Christ. It has been assumed that the Nazaratus referred to by Alexander Polyhistor is Zoroaster or Zaratus, the prefix 'Na-' being either an interpolation or scribal error; but this is impossible for a number of reasons, the most cogent of which chronological considerations. Alexander Polyhistor had a very eccentric view of Pythagoras' chronology and placed him in the middle of the seventh century B.C. to coincide with the acme of the Assyrian empire and perhaps even to enable him to visit Rome under the kings and become the teacher of Numa⁵⁷; thus Nazaratus is literally an Assyrian and has nothing to do with the much later Persians and Zoroaster. According to Eusebius⁵⁸, Pythagoras flourished in the reign of Sennacherib (705—681 B.C.) and of his son (Nergilus), as stated by Alexander Polyhistor:

et post haec omnia denuo res quasdam et facta Senecheribi (705—681) Polyhistor refert; deque eius filio ... atque Pythagoram sapientem eodem tempore sub iis fuisse aiunt.

According, to Alexander, Pythagoras was among the mercenaries collected by Nergilus (*qui ... primus mercenarios milites auxilio sibi collegit, quorum unus Pythagoras erat, Chaldaeorum sapientiae discipulus*).⁵⁹ It is fairly obvious then that Polyhistor had some obscure Chaldaean sage (hence the reference to *Chaldaeorum sapientiae discipulus*) in mind under the name of Nazaratus and not Zoroaster or Zaratus whom other writers on Pythagoras dated after Cyrus' destruction of the Chaldaean empire so that Zaratus or Zoroaster can live at Babylon, now a Persian city⁶⁰. In any case, Polyhistor associates the Assyrians very cosely with the

⁵⁵ Sampson is termed a ναζιραῖος at *Jud.* 13,5 in the LXX. Likewise the son Manoe will not drink wine or eat impure food (cf. *Jud.* 13,14), both Pythagorean traits. For the Hebrew meanings of 'nazir' cf. the Oxford Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon, DXLII.

⁵⁶ Cf. A Greek Patristic Lexicon, Oxford 1961, 897.

⁵⁷ Cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, II, LIX; Ovid, *Met.* XV 479; and Cicero, *De rep.* II 15,28.

⁵⁸ Euseb., *Chron.* I 29,10 ap. F. Jacoby, *Apollodors Chronik*, New York 1973, 226. To this chronology also belongs Epiphanius' statement that Pythagoras died in Media (P.G. 41, col. 205): Οὔρος (sc. Πυθαγόρας) δὲ τέλειος ἐν τῇ Μηδίᾳ τὸν βίον καταστρέφει. According to Oehler (ap. A. Delatte, *Essai sur la politique pythagoricienne*, Liège—Paris 1922, 234), the reading ἐν τῇ Μηδίᾳ comes from a faulty reading by a translator from the Latin text which had 'inedia', Pythagoras' traditional mode of suicide, according to Satyros. However, it may be straining credulity to suggest that Epiphanius read a Greek translation of an original Latin source. It is easier to suppose that he had access to a selection from Polyhistor in Greek.

⁵⁹ Euseb., *Chron.* I 35,22, ap. F. Jacoby, *Apollodors Chronik*, 226; cf. also F. Jacoby, *F Gr Hist*, Vol. IIIa, Leiden 1940, 112.

⁶⁰ Cf. Theol. Ar., 56 (De Falco) ap. Cumont-Bidez, op. cit., 283. Zoroaster and Ostanes are here both termed 'Babylonians'.

Hebrews⁶¹ so that it is not surprising that some Greeks before Clement equated this Nazaratus with Ezekiel. Of course, this is quite impossible on chronological and other grounds, even if one were to accept the statement by the author of Ezekiel that he had his visions in 592 B.C.⁶². However, it is not strange that certain identified Ezekiel with the Nazirite Nazaratus because in the book of Ezekiel one meets with prescriptions for the 'sons of Zadok' (the Qumran sect of the Essenes also termed themselves this)⁶³, the Jerusalem priesthood, which sound Pythagorean: the wearing of linen garments, not wool⁶⁴; the abstention from wine⁶⁵; while the sons of Zadok are not allowed to eat any *σνησιμαῖον* (LXX, Ez. 44,31).

Thus there existed in antiquity among the Jews of Alexandria a specifically Jewish Pythagoras who had borrowed many of his teachings from the *Pentateuch*. This fiction was nourished not only by the fortuitous similarities between the doctrines of the Pythagorean school and the Hebrew religion, but also by an independent historical tradition, notably associated with Neanthes, which linked Pythagoras closely with Syria and Palestine. This tradition only served to bolster the conviction of the Hellenistic Jews that Pythagoras was virtually one of themselves. Owing to the work of Lévy, Dupont-Sommer and others, the evidence that the Essene sect at Qumran was basically Pythagorean, as stated by Josephus, becomes at once more impressive if this Jewish Pythagoras of Aristoboulos, Hermippos, and Neanthes is taken into consideration. However, the purpose of this account has been merely to demonstrate the bulk of testimony concerning this Jewish Pythagoras who was according to Lévy⁶⁶, to influence the course of history profoundly, even Lévy failed to give us an outline of Pythagoras of Palestine as found in Hellenistic Jewish and Greek authors.

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⁶¹ F. Jacoby, *F Gr Hist*, Vol. IIIa, 112.

⁶² R. H. Pfeiffer, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, London 1953, 519. Ezekiel has been dated in the Maccabaeian period (164—163) by Seinecke, ap. Pfeiffer, 519, which accords with the possible influence of the Essenes on the work.

⁶³ J. M. Allegro, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 104.

⁶⁴ Ez. 44,17; cf. Herod. II 81 on linen garments and the Pythagorean ban on wool.

⁶⁵ Ez. 44,21; *ἀσνία* was practised by the Pythagoreans, cf. Iamb., *VP*. 69.

⁶⁶ I. Lévy, *Recherches sur les sources de la légende de Pythagore*, Paris 1926, 149.