CHAPTER 3

Moorings: Civic Status and Associations

Ἐπειδὴ τοίνυν ἡ κατὰ τῶν νόμων πεῖρα εὐοδεῖν ἔδοξεν αὐτῷ τὰς προσευχὰς ἁρπάσαντι καὶ μηδὲ τοὔνομα ὑπολιπομένῳ, πάλιν ἐφ᾽ ἕτερον ἐτρέπετο, τὴν τῆς ἡμετέρας πολιτείας ἀναίρεσιν, ἵν᾽ ἀποκοπέντων οἷς μόνοις ἐφώρμει ὁ ἡμέτερος βίος ἐθῶν τε πατρίων καὶ μετουσίας πολιτικῶν δικαίων τὰς ἐσχάτας ὑπομένωμε συμφορὰς οὐδενὸς ἐπειλημμένοι πείσματος εἰς ἀσφάλειαν. ὀλίγαις γὰρ ὑστερον ἡμέραις τίθησι πρόγραμμα, δι᾽ οὗ ξένους καὶ ἐπήλυδας ἡμᾶς ἀπεκάλει μηδὲ λόγου μεταδούς, ἀλλ’ ἀκρίτως καταδικάζων.

[“Now, since the attempt against the laws seemed to have succeeded when he had seized the synagogues and not even left behind their name, he turned again to another matter, the annulment of our citizenship, so that, when the only things to which our life was moored had been cut away, our paternal customs and our participation in civic rights, we might endure the most extreme disasters, not laying hold of any rope for safety. For, a few days later, he issues an edict in which he called us foreigners and immigrants, not even having given us an opportunity to argue, but condemning us without a hearing.”] (Philo, In Flaccum, 53–54)

For Philo, the synagogue and citizenship were the very moorings of the Alexandrian Judean community. According to Philo, in 38 CE the Roman pro-consul of Egypt, Avilius Flaccus, attacked the Judeans’ synagogues and took away their politeia (“citizenship”). The reality seems to be more complicated, and we might never disentangle and satisfactorily explain the events behind Philo’s account. Philo’s emphasis on the synagogues and on citizenship as moorings raises important questions. What was meant by politeia? This has been the subject of considerable controversy and merits careful discussion, and so the following chapter in this study argues that Philo had in mind “citizenship,” and in particular, Alexandrian citizenship. For now, it is enough to note the means by which Flaccus did away with their politeia, through a declaration that they were “foreigners and immigrants,” pointing rather unmistakably to a reference to citizenship and not to rights of association and self-government.

What would it have meant to be a polites (“citizen”) of Alexandria or any Greek city for that matter? Who were citizens and who were not? What were their obligations and what privileges did the status offer?
The synagogue, too, deserves attention. Was this an institution with any Greek precedents? What rights did citizens normally have to religious association; how common were they? To establish a background on Judean integration, this study explores these two moorings, as Philo regards them, as two separate concepts in the lives of Judeans in each city discussed, as much as the evidence permits.

1 Citizens, Metics and Foreigners in the Hellenistic World

In Greek cities of the early Empire, although individual cities' administration and bureaucratic terminology differed greatly, there was widespread similarity both in the institution and terminology of citizen status. The present study addresses citizens, resident foreigners (called ‘metics’ or ‘parics’) and non-resident foreigners.

These three basic categories are illustrated by a decree of 86/5 BCE from Ephesus. As Ephesus mobilized to reverse its previous policy of appeasement and alliance with Mithridates, its first task was to raise an adequate defense. In the decree, the council and people offer enticements to various classes to protect the city. First, former citizens “whose names have been expunged” or those “who have had a liability entered against them” are invited to support the resistance. Such individuals are to be “possessed of full status” ([εἶ]ναι ἐντίμους) and the suits against them voided.1 Two classes of resident-foreigner, those who paid taxes at the same rate as citizens and those identified as metics (πάροικοι), are also given citizenship as a reward for assistance. The same offer is extended to sacred slaves, freedmen and even foreigners. All of these non-citizens will be made “citizens on an equal footing.” Public slaves willing to fight could be manumitted and become metics.2

The decree clarifies that there were three basic categories of free person: citizens, resident-foreigners and foreigners proper. It also shows occasional

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1 . . . τοὺς μὲν ἐκγεγραμμένους ἢ παραγεγραμμένους ὑπὸ λογιστῶν ιερῶν ἢ δημοσίων ὑποτινοῦν τρόπων πάλιν εἶναι ἐντίμους καὶ ἰκανώς ἓκατον τὰς καὶ τὰς ἐκγραφὰς καὶ ὀφειλήματα, τοὺς δὲ παραγεγραμμένους πρὸς Ἰερᾶς καταδίκας ἢ δημοσίας ἢ ἐπίτειμα ιερὰ ἢ δημόσια ἢ ἄλλα ὀφειλήματα ὡς ὑποτινοῦν τρόπων παραίτησαι πάντας καὶ εἶναι ἀκύρους τὰς καὶ τὰς ἀνάλημμα τῶν πράξεων . . . (Inschr. von Ephesos 8.27–33).

2 εἶναι δὲ καὶ τοὺς ἰσοτελεῖς καὶ παροίκους καὶ ιεροὺς καὶ ἐξελευθέρους καὶ ἔνους, ὅσοι ἀνάλαβοι τὰ δίπλα καὶ πρὸς τὸ ὑποτινὸς ἐπικράτους ἢ ὀφειλήματα, πάντας πολίτας ἐπὶ τῆς ἴσης καὶ ἰσοτελεῖς τοὺς δὲ δημοσίως ἐξελευθέρους τοὺς καὶ παροίκους . . . (Inschr. von Ephesos 8.43–45, 47–48).