The mere presence of Greek manuscripts in the caves of Qumran is in itself intriguing and important. Were some members of the sect more familiar with Greek than Hebrew? While it is true that at some time a scribe tried out his reed pen on a potsherd and wrote on it some not very good Hebrew characters, it would be hazardous indeed to conclude from this that he was better at Greek; more serious pieces of evidence come from Cave 7 where the fragments were all Greek; and from some Greek fragments of the Pentateuch from Cave 4. Cave 7 contained also at least one fragment of the Pentateuch and one is tempted to speculate about the range of the literature now represented by these two caves. Since 7Q2 has been identified as a fragment of the Epistle of Jeremiah it may originally have been very wide. We can at least say that together these two caves suggest an interest in the Greek Pentateuch and in a wider range of scriptures in the Greek language. This care for the Greek Bible is confirmed when more detailed study reveals that the manuscripts are evidence for concern about the text of that Bible; but it is uncertain whether any such concern resulted in any activity at Qumran itself, and the significance of Greek manuscripts there must be discussed against a wider background.\(^1\)

The approximately one hundred years of Ptolemaic rule of Palestine, 300-200 B.C., brought a time which apart from the invasion by Antiochus III, 219-17, was of relatively peaceful development; while our knowledge of the history of the period is scanty, the Zenon papyrus and Vienna pap. no. 24552 give some useful knowledge of Ptolemaic administration, an administration which brought a pervasive Hellenization. In connexion with this period we should perhaps consider the certainly puzzling evidence of 1 Mac 12:19-23 (cf Jos \textit{Ant} 12:225-227) which professes to be a copy of a letter from king Areus of Sparta to Onias the high priest.\(^2\) There is little doubt that Areus I must be meant

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1 In what follows I am greatly indebted to the magisterial work of Martin Hengel, \textit{Judentum und Hellenismus} (Tübingen: Mohr, 1969).

since Areus II, the only other Spartan king with this name, died at the age of eight. At this time the Jews were part of the empire of Ptolemy I and little is known of their history in the period except the feud between Oniads and Tobias; Josephus, in the passage mentioned, mistakenly assigns the time of this letter to Onias III, but understandably so, since this is the period about which he was so much better informed. The relevance of the incident is that it illustrates the attitude of a Greek king, significantly the first of Sparta to act like a Hellenistic prince (holding court and issuing his own coinage), to the Jews as a people likely to sympathize with his own aims. These were, at least in the year 272 B.C., to unite Greek cities against Antigonus II, taking advantage of Ptolemaic rivalry with the Antigonids in the Aegean area. The letter, quoted on an occasion when the Hasmonaean Jonathan in about 143 B.C. sent ambassadors to Rome and Sparta, is an improbable invention for a Jew, but might have been preserved for generations as a curiosity, if authentic; and though it may well have suffered additions and embellishments, especially in the Antiquities version at the hands of Josephus or his sources, it seems to be more likely to be genuine than critics have believed. We ought not to reject unexpected evidence bearing on a sector of history about which we know so little. There are other pieces of evidence for some contact between Judah and Sparta: the actual letter of Jonathan sent with his ambassadors, to which the copy of the old letter from Areus is an appendix (1 Mac 12:6-18); a letter from Sparta after Jonathan’s death to his brother and successor Simon (1 Mac 14:16-23) in the context of communications also from Rome; the inclusion of Sparta in a summons from Rome for all peoples to give support to Simon against Antiochus VI, and the flight of the deposed Jason to Lacedaemonia (2 Mac 5:9) because he regarded the people as kin with his own, a notion reflected in the attempt to include Abraham in a genealogy with both Spartans and Jews which we find in Jos Ant 1:240.

Political circumstances rather than religious or moral ideals bind different nations in alliances. In the campaigns which virtually ended with Panion (c. 201) Jews fought in both Seleucid and Ptolemaic armies. Nor was the Seleucid house giving yet any hint of its destiny to become a classical instance of the nation’s enemies: Antiochus III gave considerable assistance to the rebuilding of Jerusalem, including the Temple; he granted tax exemptions and, most significantly freedom to follow the Law (Ant 12:138-144). Nevertheless sympathy with Egypt rather than with Syria could rise again according to circum-