A NOTE ON DEMETRIUS THE CHRONOGRAPHER,
Fr. 2.11 (= Eusebius, PrEv 9.21.11)¹

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Five of the six extant fragments of Demetrius' chronography are preserved, in an excerpted form and by way of Alexander Polyhistor's On the Jews, in the ninth book of the Praeparatio Evangelica of the early Christian historian and scholar Eusebius.² Fragment Two, by far the longest of the five, contains what traditionally has been regarded as a series of "answers" designed to reconcile the difficulties and to explain the reticulate chronologies that are uncovered by a close reading of the biblical text. Demetrius' work is thus representative of a particular form of interpretive writing known as aπορίαι καὶ λύσεις,³ or the "difficulties and solutions" technique, which appears to have been a fairly common genre throughout the Hellenistic East.⁴ For instance, fr. 2.1-6 answers

¹ I wish to thank Prof. Drs. Eileen M. Schuller and Adele Reinhartz for their careful readings of this paper. The opinions and arguments expressed herein, however, are entirely mine.
² It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the issues pertaining to the authorship or the dating and provenance of the fragments. For general discussions of these issues, see A.-M. Denis, Introduction aux pseudépigraphes grecs d'Ancien Testament. SVTP I (Leiden, 1970) 248-251; J. Hanson, "Demetrius the Chronographer", OTP, vol. II. Ed. J.H. Charlesworth (New York, 1985) 843-844; C.R. Holladay, Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors, vol. I: Historians, SBLTT 20 (Chico, CA, 1983) 51-52; N. Walter, "Fragmente jüdisch-hellenistischer Exegeten: Aristobulus, Demetrios, Aristeas", Unterweisung in lehrhafter Form. Band III.2: Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit (Gütersloh, 1975) 280-281. Demetrius probably flourished in Alexandria near the end of the third c. B.C.E.
³ Also known as ζάπηματα καὶ λύσεις or erotapokriseis. See H. Dörrie and H. Dörries, "Erotapokriseis", RAC 6 (1966) cols. 342-370 (esp. 343-345).
the question, "How could Jacob sire twelve children in only seven years?", while the issue of "Why did Joseph present Benjamin with a portion of meat five times larger than that given to each of his brothers?" is certainly the focus of fr. 2.14.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a plausible solution to a rather intricate chronological problem at fr. 2.11 (PrEv 9.21.11). From there I will demonstrate that Demetrius' chronography was somewhat more than a series of loosely-connected "solutions" that were related to each other only by the place that their implied "difficulties" occupied in the course of the biblical narrative. In spite of the incomplete form of the present state of the work, it is clear that a number of Demetrius' aporiai kai luseis were interconnected in at least one fundamental way.

At first glance fr. 2.11 appears to proffer a simple summary of the ages of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph at the time of the latter’s release from prison in Egypt and entry into Pharaoh’s service. There is, however, the puzzling matter of the statement that "Jacob was [then] 120 years old, one year before the death of Isaac at 180", a statement that seems on the surface to violate the internal logic of Demetrius’ own chronological deliberations. In order to discover why this is so we must first consider these deliberations in their entirety.

According to fr. 2.2, Isaac was 137 years old and Jacob was 77 years old when Jacob fled to Haran in Mesopotamia. At the age of 84, having spent 7 years in Haran, Jacob married the two daughters of Laban (fr. 2.3, no. 5 on Table 1). Over the next 7 years, twelve children were sired by Jacob (frr. 2.3-5, nos. 6-15), after which Jacob remained in Haran a further 6 years (fr. 2.6, no. 16). As a result, Jacob spent a total of 20 years in Haran, at the end of which time Isaac was 157 years old and Jacob was 97 years old. Demetrius then proceeds to tell us that Jacob had dwelt near Hamor for 10 years when Dinah was defiled by Shechem son of Hamor (fr. 2.9, no. 32). At this time, then, Isaac would have been 167 years old, Jacob would have been 107 years old, and 30 years would have passed since Jacob’s flight to Haran. Meanwhile, Demetrius notes that Dinah was 16 years and 4 months at the time of her rape (no. 44), which is precisely 10 years