

ABOUT ARTAPANUS WORKS

Historian; lived in Alexandria in the second century B.C. He wrote a history of the Jews, parts of which have been preserved in the writings of the church-fathers Eusebius ("Præparatio Evangelica," ix. 18, 23) and Clement of Alexandria ("Stromata," i. 23, 154), as well as in those of some later authors. Freudenthal shows that both Alexander Polyhistor and Josephus made use of Artapanus' work. The fragments that have survived enable one to form an opinion—not a very flattering one—as to the merits of their author. Artapanus evidently belonged to that narrowminded circle of Hellenizing Jews that were unable to grasp what was truly great in Judaism, and, therefore, in their mistaken apologetic zeal—for even in those early days Judaism had its opponents among the Hellenes—set about glorifying Judaism to the outer world by inventing all manner of fables concerning the Jews. As an illustration of this method, the following account of Moses will serve. According to Artapanus (Eusebius, *ibid.* ix. 27), Moses is he whom the Greeks called Musæus; he was, however, not (as in the Greek legend) the pupil, but the teacher, of Orpheus. Wherefore Moses is not only the inventor of many useful appliances and arts, such as navigation, architecture, military strategy, and of philosophy, but is also—this is peculiar to Artapanus—the real founder of the Greek-Egyptian worship. By the Egyptians, whose political system he organized, Moses was called Hermes διὰ τὸν τὸν ἐρὸν γραμμάτων ὀρμηναίαν ("because he expounded the writings of the priests"). The departure from Egypt is then recounted, with many haggadic additions and embellishments. The astounding assertion, that Moses and the Patriarchs were the founders of the Egyptian religion, led Freudenthal to the assumption that "Artapanus" must be a pseudonym assumed by some Jewish writer who desired to be taken for an Egyptian priest, in order to give greater weight to his words. This supposition, however, as Schürer points out, is highly improbable, and fails to explain the remarkable phenomenon of a Jew ascribing a Jewish origin to the Egyptian pantheon. It is much more probable that Artapanus belonged to a syncretistic circle of philosophers that saw no such grave objection to a moderate idolatry as to prevent its being accepted as of Jewish origin. Having adopted the Greek fables that derived the Egyptian cult from Grecian heroes, and having identified these heroes with Biblical personages, he had no alternative but to trace the idolatry of Egypt to a Jewish source.

[Or, Artapanus' position may have been somewhat as follows: Thinking it necessary for the honor of the Jewish people that they should be regarded as the source of all religion, he chose to attribute to them the origin of the Egyptian religion in spite of difficulties that he may have felt in connection with its idolatry.—T.)

Bibliography: Dähne, *Geschichtl. Darstellung*, ii. 200-203;
Freudenthal, *Alexander Polyhistor*, pp. 143-174, 215, 231 *et seq.*;
Susemihl, *Gesch. der Griechischen Literatur*, ii. 646 *et seq.*;
Grätz, *Gesch. der Juden*, iii. 606;

Willrich, *Juden und Griechen*, p. 160;
Schürer, *Gesch.* iii. 354-357, who gives further references. T. L. G.

Information on Artapanus

Martin McNamara writes: "Artapanus' work *Concerning the Jews* is known to us only through excerpts in the Church Fathers, principally Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata*) and Eusebius (*Praeparatio Evangelica*). He methodically embellishes, or rewrites, the biblical account to glorify the Jewish people and to show that the Egyptians were indebted to them for all useful knowledge and information. Abraham is said to have taught astrology to the Pharaoh Pharethothes. Joseph introduced better cultivation of land. Moses was the real founder of all culture and in fact of the worship of the gods in Egypt. The Exodus from Egypt is also narrated with some embellishment." (*Intertestamental Literature*, pp. 221-222)

James Charlesworth writes: "The first fragment, an extract of one section from his *En tois Ioudaikois*, contains both an explanation of Hermioth, the name of the Jews before Abraham called them *Hebraious*, and a report that Abraham taught astrology to Pharaoh. The second, a quotation of four sections from his *Peri Ioudaion*, contains a story of Moses, who is identified with Musaeus, described as the teacher of Orpheus, and called Hermes. *Inter alia* Moses divided the state (*ten polin*) into 36 sections and assigned to each a god (*kai hekasto ton nomon apotaxai ton theon sephthesesthai*), invented hieroglyphics, and was military commander of a war against the Ethiopians." (*The Pseudepigrapha and Modern Research*, p. 83)

Emil Schürer writes: "In his work *περι Ιουδαιων* Artapanus is still farther removed than Eupolemus from the sober and unadorned style of Demetrius. The sacred history is quite methodically embellished, or to speak more correctly remodelled, by fantastic and tasteless additions—and this recasting is throughout in the interest of the tendency to a glorification of the Jewish people. One chief aim is directed towards proving, that the Egyptians were indebted to the Jews for all useful knowledge and institutions. Thus the very first fragment (Euseb. *Praep. evang.* ix. 18) relates that Abraham, when he journeyed into Egypt, instructed the king, Pharethothes, in astrology. A second (Euseb. ix. 23) narrates how Joseph, when raised by the king to be the chief governor of the country, provided for the better cultivation of the land. And finally, the long article concerning Moses (Euseb. ix. 27) gives detailed information of his being the real founder of all the culture and even of the worship of the gods in Egypt. For he it was whom the Greeks call Musaeus, the instructor of Orpheus, the author of a multitude of useful inventions and attainments, of navigation, architecture, military science, and philosophy. He also divided the country into thirty-six provinces, and commanded each province to worship God; he also instructed the priests in hieroglyphics. He introduced order into State affairs. Hence he was beloved by the Egyptians, who called him Hermas, *δια την των ιερων γραμματων εμνηναιον*. King Chenephres however sought, out of envy, to get rid of him. But none of the means he used succeeded. When Chenephres was dead, Moses received commandment from God to deliver His people from Egyptian bondage. The history of the exodus and of all that preceded it, especially of the miracles by which the permission to depart was extorted, is then related at length and in accordance with the Scripture

narrative, but at the same time with many additions and embellishments. Single traits from this history are related, with express appeal to Artapanus, in Clemens Alex. *Strom.* i. 23. 154, in *Chron. pasch.* ed. Dindorf, i. 117, and in the *Chron. anonym.* in Cramer, *Anecdota*, Paris, ii. 176. Traces of the employment of this work may be pointed out especially in Josephus (see Freudenthal, pp. 169-171). The more plainly its Jewish authorship is manifested by the tendency of the whole work, the more strange does it appear, that Moses and the patriarchs should be exhibited as founders of the Egyptian worships. Jacob and his sons are represented as founding the sanctuaries at Athos and Heliopolis (23. 4). Moses directs each province to honour God (τον Θεον σεφθησεσθαι); he prescribes the consecration of the Ibis (27. 9) and of Apis (27. 12). In a word, the religion of Egypt is referred to Jewish authority. This fact has been explained by Freudenthal by the surely incorrect notion, that the author was indeed a Jew, but wanted to pass for a heathen, and indeed for an Egyptian priest (pp. 149 sq., 152 sq.) For nowhere does such an attempt come plainly forward. And with such a tendency, an entirely unknown name such as Artapanus would certainly never have been chosen as a shield. Nor does it at all explain the phenomena. For if the work had appeared under a heathen mask, we should surely expect, that it would have energetically denounced in the name of this acknowledged authority the abomination of idol-worship, as is actually done, e.g. in the case of the Sibyllist (iii. 20), and of pseudo-Aristeas (pp. 38, 14 sq., ed. Mor. Schmidt). Thus, under all circumstances, the strange fact remains, that Jewish author has represented Moses as the founder of Egyptian rites. But however strange this may appear, it is explained by the tendency of the whole. Moses was the introducer of all culture, even of religious culture. This and nothing else is the meaning. Besides, it must be considered, that the heathen worship is in reality represented in a tolerably innocent light. For the sacred animals are not so much worshipped, as on the contrary 'consecrated' for their utility—τῷ Θεῷ, as we cannot but conclude. But even thus, we certainly have still to do with a Jewish author, who cared more for the honour of the Jewish name, than for the purity of divine worship. Perhaps too an apologetic purpose co-operated in causing the Jews, who were decried as despisers of the gods, to figure as founders of religious worship. Considering the marked prominence of Egyptian references, there needs no other proof that the author was an real Egyptian. With regard to date, it can only be affirmed with certainty of him and of those who follow, that they were predecessors of Alexander Polyhistor." (*The Literature of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus*, pp. 207-208)

James Charlesworth writes: "Although it is impossible to specify Artapanus' dates, it is evident he lived in the second century B.C., probably in Egypt. The fragments contain the claim that Egyptian culture, including idolatry and polytheism, was shaped by Abraham, Joseph and Moses. The last is even deified. These liberal ideas scarcely warrant the conclusion that Artapanus was a 'heathen' (so J. Freudenthal, *Alexander Polyhistor*. Breslau: Skutsch, 1875, pp. 146-48); they reveal how far a syncretistic hellenistic Jew can veer away from the biblical tradition (so E. Schürer, *History*, 2d Div., vol. 3, p. 208; P. Dalbert, *Missionsliteratur*, pp. 42-52). It is probable that Artapanus was forced into hyperbole because he was composing a pro-Jewish apology against an Egyptian anti-Semitic Moses legend (so M. Braun, *History and Romance in Graeco-Oriental Literature*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1938; pp. 26-31)." (*The Pseudepigrapha and Modern*

Research, pp. 82-83)

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