In spite of its highly rhetorical character, Philo’s *Legatio ad Gaium* reflects a historical situation with real people and real places. New light can be shed on Philo’s embassy to the emperor Caligula in 38-39 CE by coupling the fields of archaeology and philology. Archaeologists have used Philo’s account in his *Legatio* to interpret excavated remains in Rome, and these remains can in turn offer some new perspectives on the philosopher-ambassador’s rhetoric. The emperor wanted veneration from the Jews and pampered Philo with access to his private retreat. However, Philo’s response to the luxurious setting, while not entirely indifferent, was not what the emperor expected.

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