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PROSELYTES IN LATE SECOND TEMPLE JUDEA: CONVERSION REQUIREMENTS AND ETHNIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL BOUNDARIES IN A JUDEAN AREA

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Introduction

While many studies have highlighted the complexity behind the conversion of proselytes in the Mediterranean and Near Eastern diaspora, this paper specifically focuses on proselytes in Judea, to examine the variations in their status, experience and the expectations placed on them by the Judean community after their temporary or permanent transition from non-Judean settlements to an area predominantly inhabited by Judean population.[1] An

1. This paper adopts the translation of Ἰουδαῖος as 'Judean' instead of 'Jew', while recognizing the fluidity and complexity of ethnic identities in antiquity. There has been an ongoing discussion on the appropriate rendering of this term within the context of the period under examination, focusing on the elements that shaped these identities. In contrast to the conventional translation 'Jew', which carries a predominantly religious connotation referring to adherence to Judaism or the Jewish way of life, 'Judean' conveys a geographical and territorial understanding of an ancient *ethnos* linked to its members' ancestral homeland, regardless of their or their ancestors' eventual places of residence. For the debate, see e.g. Cynthia Baker, 'A "Jew" by Any Other Name?', *JAJ* 2 (2011), pp. 151-78; John M.G. Barclay, 'Constructing Judean Identity after 70 C.E.: A Study of Josephus' *Against Apion*', in Zeba E. Crook and Philip A. Harland (eds.), *Identity and Interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), pp. 99-112; Barclay, '*Ioudaios*: Ethnicity and Translation', in Katherine M. Hockey and David G. Horrell (eds.), *Ethnicity, Race, Religion: Identities and Ideologies in Early Jewish and Christian Texts, and in Modern Interpretation* (London: T. & T. Clark, 2018), pp. 46-58;

aim behind this investigation of the boundaries between these proselytes and the local Judeans in Judea is to study the proselytes in an opposing context. In the diaspora, proselytes, though still being the minorities among the Judean communities there, originally belonged to the broader category of 'non-Judeans' and might have been a member of the ethnic majority in the local societies. Coming to Judea temporarily or permanently, these proselytes left their diaspora settings, in which the Judeans were ethnic minorities, and started encountering the Judeans in a predominantly Judean area. Except for those in Jerusalem, which was a pilgrimage city, the local Judeans' contacts with proselytes on a day-to-day basis were certainly far

Daniel Boyarin, 'The *Ioudaioi* in John and the Prehistory of "Judaism"', in Janice Capel Anderson, Claudia Setzer and Philip Harl Sellew (eds.), *Pauline Conversations in Context: Essays in Honor of Calvin J. Roetzel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), pp. 216-39; Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 69-106, 109-39; Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); Esler, 'Judean Ethnic Identity in Josephus' *Against Apion*', in Zuleika Rodgers, Margaret Daly-Denton and Anne Fitzpatrick (eds.), *A Wandering Galilean: Essays in Honor of Seán Freyne* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 73-91; Sylvie Honigman, 'The Ptolemaic and Roman Definitions of Social Categories and the Evolution of Judean Communal Identity in Egypt', in Yair Furstenberg (ed.), *Jewish and Christian Communal Identities in the Roman World* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 25-74; Steve Mason, 'Jews, Judeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History', *JSJ* 38 (2007), pp. 457-512; Daniel M. Miller, 'The Meaning of *Ioudaios* and its Relationship to Other Group Labels in Ancient "Judaism"', *CBR* 9 (2010), pp. 98-126; 'Ethnicity Comes of Age: An Overview of Twentieth-century Terms for *Ioudaios*', *CBR* 10 (2012), pp. 293–311; Miller, 'Ethnicity, Religion and the Meaning of *Ioudaios* in Ancient "Judaism"', *CBR* 12 (2014), pp. 216-65; Michael L. Satlow, 'Jew or Judean?', in Caroline Johnson Hodge *et al*. (eds.), *"The One Who Sows Bountifully": Essays in Honor of Stanley K. Stowers* (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2013), pp. 165-75; Daniel R. Schwartz, '"Judean" or "Jew"? How Should We Translate *Ioudaios* in Josephus?', in Jörg Frey, Daniel R. Schwartz and Stephanie Gripentrog (eds.), *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 3-27; Seth Schwartz, 'How Many Judaisms Were There? A Critique of Neusner and Smith on Definition and Mason and Boyarin on Categorization', *JAJ* 2 (2011), pp. 208-38.

more limited than the chance that their counterparts in the diaspora had. There were also variations in the ways that proselytes interacted with the Judeans in Judea and in their diaspora origins respectively.

The proselytes that this study focuses on include:

(1) immigrants from the diaspora to Judea, particularly Jerusalem

(2) pilgrims who visited Jerusalem for a short term

(3) the descendants of proselytes in Judea

(4) non-Judeans becoming proselytes or being requested to do so in the 'greater Judea' and its immediate neighbouring non-Judean settlements

(5) in a more remote sense, non-Judean males becoming proselytes through or for the sake of marriage with Judeans in Judea, even though they did not necessarily reside there.

What I mean by 'Judea' and being 'in Judea' is unavoidably not clear-cut. First, the term 'Judea' possesses a precise signification, denoting the immediate *chora* of Jerusalem, demarcated by the geographical boundaries of Samaria, the Jordan River, the Negev Desert and the plain of Esdraelon. This region stood apart in its distinctiveness, akin to other neighboring areas such as Idumea, Samaria, Galilee and Perea. Nevertheless, a more expansive connotation of 'Judea' emerges when viewed in a broader context, encompassing a larger territorial expanse comprising Galilee, Samaria, Judea proper, Perea and Idumea. In the writings of Josephus, both usages of the term 'Judea' can be discerned. Luke (4.44; 23.5) and Acts (10.37) also demonstrate the inclusion of Galilee within the broader territorial ambit of 'Judea'. This present paper adopts the term 'Judea' to signify the more extensive territorial scope encompassing Judea proper, Idumea, Galilee, Samaria and Perea. However, it remains imperative to underscore the explicit restriction of the reference to Judea proper when the context warrants such delineation.

Challenges also arise regarding the term 'diaspora' when applied to the period under discussion. Its usage creates a dichotomy, suggesting a higher status for those living in the Judean homeland while implying a sense of being outside due to exile and punishment for those in the diaspora. However, it is important to note that the term was not used in ancient texts to describe the condition of Judeans residing in the diaspora. In the Hellenistic-Roman eras, the term primarily referred to the exilic situations of the distant past

following the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests.[2] Nonetheless, in this study, I use the term 'diaspora' for convenience, as it is commonly used in our vocabulary, to simply denote Judeans residing outside Judea, without any implication of inferior status, exile or punishment. Moreover, I include the non-Judean settlements in the Decapolis and coastal region of Palestine as the 'local diaspora'. Although they are not typically considered part of the 'diaspora' in the same sense as Rome, Egypt and Babylonia, and despite their more immediate and frequent interactions with the Judeans in Judea, one common aspect among these groups is that the Judeans were ethnic minorities, with the exception of Jamnia.

The interactions between these proselytes and local Judeans in Judea are characterized by boundary dissolution and formation. A classic model of this process is that of Frederik Barth's anthropological study which stresses the changeability and instability of the formation and maintenance of ethnic boundaries.[3] Barth points out that the importance of the social and cultural elements which function as identity markers may change over time. Some elements become less significant and, consequently, are replaced by new markers as the means for the members of an ethnic group to continue to maintain and stress their ethnic identity and to differentiate themselves from outsiders in a changing context. Although the Parthan case that Barth uses to illustrate the process is a modern one, its complexity and certain elements of boundary formation and dissolution, as shown below, can still be detected among the examples of the proselytes discussed here. A non-Judean became a proselyte by adopting a new identity and relevant customs. However, not all Judean social and cultural elements were weighted equally in the process of conversion and the maintenance of a proselyte's newly adopted identity, with only some being emphasized as markers. Moreover, conversion and integration not only involved the changes which happened to the proselytes but also the Judeans' inclusion and exclusion of newcomers.

2. Isaiah Gafni, *Land, Centre and Diaspora: Jewish Constructs in Late Antiquity* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), pp. 19-40; Eric S. Gruen, *Diaspora: Jews amidst Greeks and Romans* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 235-36.

3. Fredrik Barth, 'Introduction', in Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969), pp. 9-38.

Upon the theoretical basis above, this article points out that:

(1) Conversion was not always an unambiguous process of adopting a new identity and Judean customs because the known cases of conversion indicate diversity on how proselytes fulfilled the requirements and what their Judean associates expected them to do, except for male circumcision as one of the very few widely and clearly agreed upon criteria. I would highlight that other requirements varied from case to case. In certain examples, it would even be difficult to indicate the changes to the proselytes or the Judean expectations for these individuals.

(2) This point leads to the second argument, that the processes and requirements of some conversion cases were more superficial than have been generally assumed. Even though some Judean texts express a welcoming and positive attitude toward proselytes, the Judeans' interests in them and the importance of these minorities in the Judean social circles should not be overemphasized.

(3) The diverse perceptions and expectations among the Judeans on the legitimacy and requirements of conversion can be explained first by the Judeans' actual and often limited experience in dealing with proselytes, and second, by the Judeans' imaginations about these newcomers and their descendants. Proselytes, to a certain extent, were an 'imagined community' in the minds of some Judeans.

What Is at Issue behind the Term Proselyte and its Rare Occurrence in the Late Second Temple Period?

Proselytes, a term that appears infrequently in ancient texts despite the undeniable presence of these individuals, are generally and broadly defined in modern times as non-Judeans who convert to the Judean cult or 'Judaism' by adopting a new identity along with Judean laws and customs. This process also came with the abandonment of their previous cultic practices and some relevant identities.[4] This definition also closely fits Philo's claim that proselytes abandoned their former social ties and denounced their ancestral

4. Arthur D. Nock, *Conversion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972 [1933]), pp. 6-7.

gods to join the Judean *politeia* (*Spec*. 1.51).[5] Philo's statement represents his ideal, just as many of his other sayings do.[6] The contrast between the previous and current selves of a proselyte is also assumed in certain modern scholarly writings.

The scholarly debate over the nature of 'conversion' in antiquity has further challenged whether the process was 'religious' in nature in that it was mainly about the shift of an individual's cultic orientation from polytheism to devotion to the Judean deity. Reframing the initial question, a proposal suggests that the changing factors, involving the Judean ethnicity, particularly the Judean cult, constituted a significant but not the only component, with becoming a proselyte implying the adoption of the citizenship of the Judean ethnic state, wherein its cultic aspect served as one of the pillars.[7] A common element among these two divergent scholarly understandings is the openness of what was presumably Judean to outsiders, be it the cultic aspect or the ethnic group's membership.

Before further exploration of the interactive process above, a close examination of the designation of proselyte in ancient texts also reflects the complexity behind the title. In the Hebrew Bible, גר does not convey the meaning of a convert in the religious sense.[8] Its usage is associated with the law codes dealing with, on one hand, the Israelites' responsibility, hospitality and social justice toward this minority group who were landless and eco-

5. See also Philo, *Virt*. 102-104. For a detailed study of proselytes in Philo's writings, see Ellen Birnbaum, *The Place of Judaism in Philo's Thought: Israel, Jews, and Proselytes* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), pp. 193-219.

6. This *politeia* in Philo's writings referred to the proselytes' integration into the Judean communities through their enjoyment of the rights and their fulfillment of the duties governed by biblical traditions and Mosaic laws, as Katell Bethelot explains ('Judaism as "Citizenship" and the Question of the Impact of Rome', in Katell Berthelot and Jonathan J. Price [eds.], *In the Crucible of Empire: The Impact of Roman Citizenship upon Greeks, Jews and Christians* [Leuven: Peeters, 2019], pp. 107-29 [123-28]). Without further elaboration, Bethelot questions how far the Mosaic law was indeed followed. This is not to deny that there were cases in which proselytes abandoned their ancestral customs and familial ties, which are seen, for example, in Tacitus, *Hist*. 5.5.1-2. However, as shown further below, the adoption of Judean customs among proselytes was diverse and highly selective.

7. Mason, 'Jews, Judeans, Judaizing, Judaism'.

8. Stuart Krauss, 'The Word "*Ger*" in the Bible and its Implications', *JBQ* 34 (2006), pp. 264-70.

nomically vulnerable and, on the other hand, the permission for them to join the Israelite community and the rules that they should follow as the Israelites did.[9] The primary way to become a גר was to live among the Israelites, temporarily or permanently, without the need to switch to the Israelite cult and follow all the Israelite customs,[10] except for certain ritual activities and prohibitions applicable to both the native-born Israelites and גרים as mentioned in the priestly sources, particularly the Holiness Code.[11] Nevertheless, relevant biblical texts do not refer to גרים in the sense that their cultic orientations associated with their ancestral origins needed to be changed, probably until the descendants of the first גר of a family were permitted to become a part of the Israelite community. This long-term assimilation process took several generations of continuing residency among the Israelites to complete. Its nature is thus very different from the relatively shorter-term process of the reorientation of a non-Judean who encountered the Judean cult, expressed an interest in it and then decided to become a proselyte.

The usages of גר as a sojourner and proselyte were only differentiated in rabbinic writings. Sojourner is elaborated as גר תושב, whose observance of the Noachic laws was required by the rabbis, whereas proselyte is called גר צדק or גר אמת, whose motivations behind the conversion were deemed as correct.[12] Another term, גר שער meaning 'proselyte of the gate', is a reference to the 'stranger within your gates' in the Hebrew Bible, but this designation dates late into the Medieval period.[13] As Segal points out, the

9. Jutta Jokiranta, 'Conceptualizing *Ger* in the Dead Sea Scrolls', in Kristin de Troyer, T. Michael Law and Marketta Liljeström (eds.), *In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes: Studies in the Biblical Text in Honour of Anneli Aejmelaeus* (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), pp. 659-77.

10. Yuval Katz-Wilfing, 'Thoughts of Conversion and the Residential Alien', *Judaica Petropolitana* 12 (2019), pp. 5-30 (9).

11. Adi Ophir and Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Goy: Israel's Multiple Others and the Birth of the Gentile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 27-29.

12. Kirsopp Lake, 'Proselytes and God-Fearers', in Frederick John Foakes Jackson and Kirsopp Lake (eds.), *The Beginnings of Christianity, Part I: The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. V* (London: Macmillan, 1933), pp. 74-95 (80-82).

13. See Alan F. Segal, 'Universalism in Judaism and Christianity', *Bulletin of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies* 51 (1991–1992), pp. 20-35 (34-35) for examples.

late development in the usage of גר reflects how earlier rabbis encountered difficulties in differentiating proselytes from residential aliens.[14]

The Greek term for proselyte does not come easier. προσήλυτος, from which the English word *proselyte* derives, is the most common translation of גר, with its earliest attestation in the Septuagint at seventy-seven times, including sixty occurrences in legal codes. Most of its usages are associated with cultic issues.[15] As a translation of גר, the noun or adjective itself might have come from προσέρχομαι, which is related to the Hebrew קרב, meaning to *come near*.[16] Just as in the Hebrew Bible, the Greek term used in the Septuagint does not directly imply a shift in an individual's cultic orientation.[17] When the translation of the Septuagint was underway, though there might have been proselytes in Hellenistic Egypt, the usage of προσήλυτος still followed the meaning of *residential alien* in the Hebrew Bible.[18] Certainly, it by no means indicates that the usages of προσήλυτος in other writings of the Late Second Temple period strictly follow those of the Septuagint.

The development of the Greek term προσήλυτος reflects that its meanings were not so clear-cut. First, during the formation process of the Septuagint,

14. Segal, 'Universalism', pp. 34-35.

15. Willoughby C. Allen, 'On the Meaning of ΠΡΟΣΗΛΥΤΟΣ in the Septuagint', *The Expositor* 4 (1894), pp. 264-75; James T. Meek, 'The Translation of *Gêr* in the Hexateuch and its Bearing on the Documentary Hypothesis', *JBL* 49 (1930), pp. 172-80; Paul F. Stuehrenberg, 'Proselyte', in David Noel Freedman (ed.), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary—Volume 5: O–Sh* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 503-5 (503).

16. James A. Loader, 'An Explanation of the Term *Prosēlutos*', *NovT* 15 (1973), pp. 270-77; Rainer Riesner, 'A Pre-Christian Jewish Mission', in Jostein Ådna and Hans Kvalbein (eds.), *The Mission of the Early Church to Jews and Gentiles* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), pp. 211-50 (250).

17. Matthew Thiessen ('Revisiting the *Prosēlutos* in "the LXX"', *JBL* 132 [2013], pp. 333-50) challenges Allen's claim that προσήλυτος in the Septuagint conveys the two meanings of residential alien and convert, arguing that the translators did not have the convert in mind. προσήλυτος, with πάροικος and γειώρας as synonyms occasionally, renders the meaning of a residential alien.

18. David M. Moffitt and C. Jacob Butera ('P.Duk. inv. 727r: New Evidence for the Meaning and Provenance of the Word Προσήλυτος', *JBL* 132 [2013], pp. 159-78) argue that προσήλυτος meant residential alien in Ptolemaic Egypt, before it was adopted in the Septuagint as a translation of גר.

a clear and exclusive meaning of προσήλυτος as a *proselyte* had not developed. The process reflects that there was not an urgent need to differentiate and clarify the usages of *proselyte* and *residential alien* in different contexts. Moreover, they were not necessarily referred to as 'proselytes' by ancient authors, as in the case of Josephus's writings, which do not use the term at all. Philo refers to the term προσήλυτος only in his exegesis and exposition of the biblical passages where this term is encountered, and he employs the term ἔπηλυς and its different forms in other instances.[19] Nevertheless, the descriptions of the process, intentions and aftermaths of their conversion reflect that they belonged to the group being discussed in this paper.

The Implications behind the Clear and Unclear Mentions, as well as the Silence on Conversion Requirements

In addition to the terms associated with proselytes, ambiguity can also be found among the descriptions of the conversion requirements. In Josephus's writings, from which come many known cases of conversion in the period under discussion, he sometimes only mentions male circumcision as the requirement, while on other occasions he mentions other laws and customs as being part of the requirement alongside circumcision without specifying what they were. The inclusion of references to Josephus's writings and other texts in this discussion should not be misconstrued as treating them as legal statements. It is important to note that the majority of these references do not intend to serve as a comprehensive legal guide outlining the criteria for identifying a person as a proselyte or offering a detailed account of the conversion process. Josephus wrote at his own discretion, without any obligation to directly address our specific inquiries. However, it is worth considering whether the contents of these writings may shed light on real-life situations, rather than solely reflecting Josephus's personal interpretations and justifications within the post-revolt atmosphere of Flavian Rome. Undoubtedly, from his repeated sayings, circumcision was a step that a non-Judean male would have been required to take in order to become a proselyte. In certain cases, this requirement is even emphasized and further narrated as a difficult step. Simultaneously, the same descriptions also reflect

19. Birnbaum, *Place of Judaism*, pp. 195-202.

the importance of this rite over the others. It is a definite symbol that points to the change of one's status from a non-Judean to a proselyte.

What merits further examination in this context is Josephus's intended meaning behind the phrase 'other customs' and the reasons for his deliberate or inadvertent omission of specific details. Undoubtedly, Josephus's explicit agenda of defending and elucidating Judean laws, prominently manifested in his apologetic work *Against Apion*, is readily apparent. However, it should not be assumed that the 'other customs' he references, which were expected to be observed by proselytes, align precisely with those he vigorously defended against ridicule and skepticism. The question at hand also revolves around Josephus's audience's perception of the connection between Judean customs and proselytes, as well as the underlying assumptions Josephus made regarding their preexisting notions.

First, Josephus might have expected his audience's agreement and understanding that in becoming a member of an ethnic group, one would need to adopt and follow its ancestral customs. If a proselyte should be understood as a non-Judean individual joining the Judean state, rather than turning to the Judean cult, which represent two aforementioned viewpoints in the scholarly debate on the nature of 'conversion', this concept is akin to a notion that Josephus's audience would have personally understood. If an outsider was to join their own ethnic group, that outsider would also undergo a similar process of integration. The new members observed certain ancestral customs and traditions of the ethnic groups they joined. Thus, Josephus's audience would have also assumed that proselytes were expected to adopt certain customs which were important to the Judeans.

Another possibility, which is not contradictory to the one above, is that Josephus's audience knew what these customs were, or thought that they did, albeit stereotypically. Certainly, one should not expect that they indeed knew the details of Judean laws and customs. This is evident from the rumours and biases against the Judeans that Josephus combated in his apologies. However, it is obvious that some Judean customs, including the Sabbath and dietary laws, particularly attracted the attention of Greco-Roman writers.[20] The way these authors perceived and described these customs

20. See e.g. Menahem Stern, 'The Jews in Greek and Latin Literature', in Samuel Safrai and Menahem Stern (eds.), *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions, 2—Section 1, Volume 2* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), pp. 1101-

was often stereotypical, yet their attention to these characteristics of the Judean *ethnos* derived from the fact that the Judeans' observation of these customs was so obvious that it could hardly have escaped the eyes of their non-Judean neighbours. These customs were understood as the ethnic characteristics of the Judeans. Non-Judeans did not need to accurately know the details of these stereotyped markers to give rise to such social and cultural consequences.[21] Even without Josephus's explanation, his non-Judean audience would have thought of the widely known Judean customs as other Greco-Roman writers did when they spoke of Judean ethnicity.

It is common that when outsiders describe or look up the characteristics of another ethnic group, only certain elements become the centres of their attention. Likewise, the insiders of an ethnic group also do use focal points when there is a need to demonstrate the social and cultural characteristics of their ethnicity, even though what they put on the table may be different from those in the minds of the outsiders. The same is also applicable to the ways that Judeans maintained their ethnic identity through an emphasis on certain customs as an expression of what characterized an individual as a Judean. In other words, only certain customs, rather than the whole set of laws, would have functioned as ethnic markers to define insiders and differentiate Judeans from non-Judeans. In addition to Greco-Roman authors, Philo also stresses the importance of some Judean customs over others. To him, in addition to male circumcision, the observance of the Sabbath and

59; Bilhah Wardy, 'Jewish Religion in Pagan Literature during the Late Republic and Early Empire', in Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase (eds.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: II.19.1* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1979), pp. 592-613; John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 6-13; John Gager, *The Origins of Anti-Semitism: Attitudes toward Judaism in Pagan and Christian Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 35-66; Jerry L. Daniel, 'Anti-Semitism in the Hellenistic-Roman Period', *JBL* 98 (1979), pp. 45-65 (54-57); Heather McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue: The Question of Sabbath Worship in Ancient Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp. 89-131; Peter Schäfer, *Judeophobia: Attitudes toward the Jews in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), pp. 66-92.

21. Andrew S. Jacobs, *Christ Circumcised: A Study in Early Christian History and Difference* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), pp. 15-19.

Judean holidays served as the means to distinguish the Judeans from their non-Judean counterparts.[22]

Josephus's use of vague and unelaborated language, for which he was not obligated to provide clarification or might not have perceived the necessity to do so, can also be attributed to the variations among different Judean communities regarding which laws and customs should be observed by proselytes. Except for some clear and indispensable customs, such as male circumcision and those discussed above, which were also the minimum of what Judeans widely observed, there were different views on the roles and significance of other customs as the identity markers of not only proselytes but also Judeans. Regarding the latter group, as Barclay has pointed out, there existed notable diversity among diaspora Judeans.[23] This diversity encompassed individuals strictly adhering to a wide range of Judean laws and customs, those embracing what is now known as 'minimal Judaism' and those who chose to relinquish their Judean identities and heritage. They exhibited incoherent reactions to their differing circumstances, with individual preferences contributing to the plurality in maintaining and compromising Judean customs without necessarily losing their Judean identities and senses of Judeanness. It is thus not surprising that different Judeans or Judean communities in the period under discussion also did not share the same expectation on, first, the customs that proselytes needed to adopt in addition to male circumcision and, second, the extent that they should integrate into the Judean communities. Although there is a scarcity of explicit evidence in ancient sources that directly points to proselytes in this regard, it is not unexpected to find a range of perspectives on Judean customs among different Judeans, as exemplified by Philo's writings. Philo presents his own understanding, which differs from the various interpretations of Judean customs held by his Judean contemporaries in Alexandria. Cohen argues that the basic rules for proselytes and conversion ceremonies were not formulated until the second or early third centuries CE, with the earliest attestation of the list of ritual ceremonies and rules (*b. Yebam*. 47a-b), including the customs proselytes should observe, the punishments for violating the rules, the

22. Maren R. Niehoff, 'Circumcision as a Marker of Identity: Philo, Origen and the Rabbis on Gen 17:1-14', *JSQ* 10 (2003), pp. 89-123 (101).

23. John M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 B.C.E.–117 C.E.)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), pp. 32-35.

specific steps for performing male circumcision and immersion for men, women and freed slaves, and the guidelines for monitoring a conversion ceremony.[24] He explains that the regulations were standardized and formulated because of the previous absence of a systematic monitoring of proselytes, their conversions and subsequent lives, except for male circumcision as the principal marker.[25] While we should exercise caution in interpreting such mentions, as they may only reflect the perspective of a limited group of Judeans, they do not necessarily imply immediate or extensive influences leading to normative practices. Nonetheless, they do stand in contrast to earlier texts that primarily touch upon male circumcision and vaguely on other customs.

In contrast to male proselytes who at least had circumcision as the key step and marker for their conversion, the situation for female proselytes was more complicated. As Schwartz notices, Josephus neither refers to the non-Judean females devoted to the Judean cult and customs as proselytes, nor does he describe their requirements and process of conversion.[26] Schwartz highlights the vagueness in Josephus's wording when referring to Fulvia's adoption of Judean customs (*Ant*. 18.82), the female members of the Adiabene household, including Helena, following Ananias's teachings to revere God in the ancestral traditions of the Judeans (*Ant*. 20.34) and the attraction of women in Damascus to the Judean cult (*War* 2.560). The descriptions are thus broader and vaguer than those about male proselytes, without a key element as the definite marker of conversion. Schwartz further argues that Josephus's narratives reflect that these women, though being committed to the Judean cult and customs, were not proselytes because of the biological obstacle that forbade them from undergoing circumcision.

24. Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, p. 211.

25. A similar process regarding the rules for sympathizers also dates from the second century CE onward. See Martin Goodman, 'Proselytising in Rabbinic Judaism', *JJS* 40 (1989), pp. 175-85; David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism: An Historical and Constructive Study of the Noahide Laws* (New York: E. Mellen Press, 1983), pp. 28-29; Jacob S. Raisin, *Gentile Reactions to Jewish Ideals: With Special Reference to Proselytes* (New York: New York Philosophical Library, 1953), pp. 222-30.

26. See also Judith M. Lieu, 'Circumcision, Women and Salvation', *NTS* 40 (1994), pp. 358-70 (364-65).

Therefore, women could only remain as sympathizers to the Judean cult or act like a Judean.

Despite Schwartz's bold proposal, we may ask further whether Josephus's narratives indeed imply the impossibility of female conversion or rather reflect the ambiguity of conversion requirements and rites for females. Although later female proselytes underwent proselyte baptisms, the earliest date of proselyte baptism is unknown.[27] However, it does not necessarily mean that conversion was impossible for women. Either there was no conversion rite or marker available to female proselytes in the period under discussion, or the rites are simply unknown to us. Again, Josephus did not intend to provide technical details in his narratives on how females could become proselytes. His aim was to demonstrate the attraction of the Judean cult for these prominent women and their roles as the fitting benefactors to the Judeans.[28] Instead of arguing that these female figures were not proselytes, we can conclude more safely that the rites and requirements for them were more unclear and perhaps less formal than those for men. It is

27. Immersion, a common Judean rite of ritual purification during the Late Second Temple period, was not an initiating ceremony as it was for early Christians. The date that immersion started becoming a rite of proselyte conversion is unknown, with arguments proposing pre-70s (see e.g. Solomon Zeitlin, 'The Halaka in the Gospels and its Relation to the Jewish Law at the Time of Jesus', *HUCA* 1 [1924], pp. 357-73 [357-63]; Lawrence H. Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew? Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish Christian Schism* [Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1985]; Karen Pusey, 'Jewish Proselyte Baptism', *ExpTim* 95 [1983–1984], pp. 141-45) and post-70s dates (see e.g. Theophilus M. Taylor, 'The Beginnings of Jewish Proselyte Baptism', *NTS* 2 [1956], pp. 193-98; Étienne Nodet, 'Le baptême des prosélytes, rite d'origine essénienne', *RB* 116 [2009], pp. 82-110). Its prominence as a more formalized conversion rite and marker for female proselytes (*b. Yebam.* 47a), like circumcision for their male counterparts, dates from the second century CE and beyond (Lieu, 'Circumcision', pp. 364-67).

28. Judith M. Lieu, 'The "Attraction of Women" in/to Early Judaism and Christianity: Gender and the Politics of Conversion', *JSNT* 72 (1998), pp. 5-22 (16); Shelly Matthews, *First Converts: Rich Pagan Women and the Rhetoric of Mission in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 29-50.

not surprising that less attention was paid to female proselytes, given that the social status of non-elite women in antiquity was generally low.[29]

The Hasty Process of In and Out

We have already discussed that male circumcision was one of the very few widely agreed upon mechanisms to mark the change of a non-Judean male to a proselyte, as evidenced from the cases in Josephus's writings. Some of these cases happened suddenly, and the potential proselytes might have known little about Judean customs and traditions. Their conversions, which can be described as forced and prompted by the situational and sudden requests from the Judeans, were also unexpected by the proselytes. In these scenarios, male circumcision, rather than anything else that required long-term learning or observance, was the only rite that could be performed immediately to signify the change of one's status.

In two instances found in Josephus's narratives about the Judean revolt, the requests for male circumcision were made in response to sudden and unexpected wartime situations, with both the potential proselytes and the Judeans reacting accordingly. When the Roman centurion Metilius was captured by the Judean rebels, he begged for their mercy and promised that he would 'Judaize as far as circumcision' (μέχρι περιτομῆς ἰουδαΐσειν) if they released him (*War* 2.454). Various readings have already been made by scholars of what he meant by 'as far as circumcision', ranging from adopting Judean customs up to male circumcision as the most extreme requirement,[30] to performing circumcision as the utmost step without going further to observe other more demanding Judean rites.[31] A major difference between these two polarized opinions is the role of circumcision in the progress of conversion. The former sees male circumcision as the final step one should take to become a proselyte, with many other less costly ways to

29. Shaye J.D. Cohen, 'Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised?', *Gender and Society* 9 (1997), pp. 560-78; Cohen, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised? Gender and Covenant in Judaism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 55-66.

30. Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, pp. 182–84.

31. Terence L. Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles: Jewish Patterns of Universalism (to 135 CE)* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), p. 394.

be Judaized before performing this ultimate rite. Thus, being circumcised also meant an embrace of other Judean customs. As for the latter, male circumcision was understood by Josephus's Metilius as the minimum requirement, which also functioned as a foundation upon which other requirements were fulfilled subsequently and gradually. There were many other rites to be observed after taking this first step. Despite the differences between the two views and the need for caution in regarding this saying in Josephus's works as a legal statement, both views concur that male circumcision, as opposed to the observance of other customs, was the sole act that Metilius could employ effectively at that moment to showcase his commitment and persuade his enemies to spare his life. Notably, there was no time to delay, nor did he have the opportunity to observe other customs, given the intense pressure and the possibility of his promise being doubted by the Judean rebels.

A similar case surrounds two nobles from Trachonitis who sought asylum among the Galileans (*Vita* 112-113). Different from Metilius's experience in which a non-Judean offered himself up for conversion, now it was the Galileans who requested the refugees to do so. While there might have been an underlying ideology intensified by the Galileans' national zeal and learned from the Hasmonean example of eradicating all potential contaminations from their land,[32] the reason behind their demand could have been more immediate. Under the pressure of a war with the Roman army and after the conflicts with their neighbouring non-Judean settlements, these outsiders, who requested to stay among the Judeans, were under suspicion by the Galileans. The Galileans' request was a means to protect the community. Performing such a painful rite without turning away was strong enough evidence to testify that these outsiders were not spies or potential traitors who would threaten the safety of the Galileans.

While it is essential to be wary of Josephus's apologetic intent in portraying himself as a competent leader capable of making sound judgments in this particular event,[33] the Galileans' demand still indicates that male cir-

32. James R. Harrison, 'Why Did Josephus and Paul Refuse to Circumcise?', *Pacifica* 17 (2004), pp. 137-58 (145-46).

33. See Honora H. Chapman, 'Paul, Josephus, and the Judean Nationalistic and Imperialistic Policy of Forced Circumcision', *Ilu Revista de Ciencias de las Religiones* 11 (2006), pp. 131-55; Aryeh Kasher, *Jews, Idumaeans and Ancient Arabs: Relations of the Jews in Eretz-Israel with the Nations of the Frontier and the Desert during the Hellenistic and Roman Era (332 BCE–70 CE)* (Tübingen: Mohr

cumcision was the primary requirement for conversion. Neither are other criteria for becoming a proselyte mentioned, nor was Josephus under any obligation to include them. It is possible that the agreement for circumcision implied the subsequent adoption of other Judean customs, or alternatively, the Galileans might have viewed circumcision as a sufficient indicator of conversion without attaching significant importance to the observance of other Judean customs. If the latter was the case, the Galileans were not overly concerned about whether the foreign nobles knew of the Judean deity and customs, as well as the implications of being a Judean. Their attention to the potential proselytes' correct motifs or even a basic understanding of the Judean traditions should not be overestimated, given that the Galileans might not have been interested in proselytizing or have had much experience with proselytes and sympathizers. Despite the location of Galilee being surrounded by non-Judean settlements in the Decapolis and on the coast, the Galileans' contact with them was not necessarily frequent in their daily lives. Thus, the chance of encountering a proselyte coming from the non-Judean regions was not high in Galilean settlements with a predominantly Judean population.

The hasty and superficial nature of the two cases during the first revolt can also be detected in two events of the Hasmonean period, despite the difference that these earlier cases involved groups, rather than an individual or two. Josephus mentions three cases of forced conversion that took place during the Hasmonean conquests to Ituraea, Idumea and Pella. Unlike the Idumean case below, Ituraeans are a more puzzling group (*Ant*. 13.318-319) as we do not hear anything further about the continuity and maintenance of their newly adopted identities and customs. As for the case of Pella, Josephus (*Ant*. 13.397) only mentions that its inhabitants refused the Hasmoneans' demand to observe Judean customs, without specifying male circumcision as a requirement.[34] Josephus was not interested in providing

Siebeck, 1988), p. 49; Shaye J.D. Cohen, *Josephus in Galilee and Rome: His Vita and Development as a Historian* (Leiden: Brill, 2002 [1979]), p. 147 n. 159.

34. The historicity of both events is doubted by some modern scholars. For the Ituraean case, there was a continuity of Ituraean culture (see e.g. Shimon Dar, 'The History of the Hermon Settlements', *PEQ* 120 [1988], pp. 26-44 [29-31]; Dar, *Settlements and Cult Sites on Mount Hermon, Israel: Ituraean Culture in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods* [Oxford: Archaeopress, 1993], pp. 34-36; Mosheh Hartel, 'Khirbet Zemel, 1985/1986', *IEJ* 37 [1987], pp. 270-72) and the absence of

further details of the conversion of the non-Judean neighbours, given that the centre of this narrative is the Hasmoneans' rapid expansion and subjugation, in which forced conversion was a part of the military process.[35] There was also no interest in describing further that the Hasmoneans were keen on ensuring the subjugated groups' observance of the Judean customs.

In contrast to the cases of the Ituraeans and the inhabitants of Pella, the Idumeans' conversion is found not only in Josephus's writings but also in the accounts of Ptolemy (Ammonius, *Diff*. 243) and Strabo (16.2.34). Other evidence in and outside Josephus's accounts also demonstrates the continuity of the Idumeans' observation of Judean customs. According to Josephus (*Ant*. 13.257-258; 15.254), the Idumeans were given the choice of either leaving their land or circumcising themselves and adopting Judean customs. Their conversion can be explained in political terms in that the Hasmoneans borrowed from the Romans' method of extending citizenship[36] as the

Judean cultural elements (see e.g. Uzi Leibner, *Settlement and History in Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine Galilee* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009], p. 36; Sean Freyne, 'Behind the Names: Galileans, Samaritans, *Ioudaioi*', in Eric M. Meyers [ed.], *Galilee through the Centuries: Confluence of Cultures* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999], pp. 39-56 [53 n. 37]; Rafael Frankel *et al*., *Settlement Dynamics and Regional Diversity in Ancient Upper Galilee: Archaeological Survey of Upper Galilee* [Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2001], pp. 108-10) in the Mount Hermon area. As for Pella, Daniel R. Schwartz ('Yannai and Pella, Josephus and Circumcision', *DSD* 18 [2011], pp. 339-59) points out that the forced conversion of its inhabitants did not match the background of the reign of Alexander Jannaeus (Josephus, *Ant*. 13.296, 400-404). Josephus's source might have been non-Judean and adopted with limited modification.

35. Steve Mason, *Life of Josephus* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), p. 75 n. 544.

36. See Morton Smith, 'Rome and the Maccabean Conversions: Notes on 1 Macc. 8', in Ernst Bammel, Charles K. Barrett and W.D. Davies (eds.), *Donum Gentilicium: New Testament Studies in Honor of D. Daube* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 1-7 (6-7). The integration of non-Romans, however, can hardly be described as 'conversion' in the studies of Roman history. For a critique of Smith's argument, see Berthelot, 'Judaism as "Citizenship"', which casts doubt on the possibility of the Hasmoneans' modelling the Romans' method. The Hasmoneans would have hardly known its details to follow during this period when the interaction between the two states was limited. However, as Berthelot also admits, the conceptual framework of the Roman citizenship method might still have been borrowed without the need of knowing its specific details. Such borrowing can

means to acquire new sources of tax and soldiers,[37] as well as build alliances with former enemies without following the Roman examples,[38] or adopting the Hellenistic model that outsiders could be incorporated into a *politeia* and given the civic status subject to the state's jurisdiction.[39] Moreover, under the nationalistic banner that the lost ancestral lands should be recovered from the hands of the non-Judeans (1 Macc. 15.3),[40] the Hasmoneans' aim was to eliminate the danger posed by the Idumeans by either expelling them or incorporating them into the Judean state, even though forcing non-Judeans to be circumcised to achieve this aim does not match the biblical principles.[41] If male circumcision ever played a role in

still be seen in a later period when the rabbinic conception and openness to גר was influenced by the Roman laws (Yael Wilfand, 'Roman Concepts of Citizenship, and Rabbinic Approaches to the Lineage of Converts and the Integration of their Descendants into Israel', *JAJ* 11 [2020], pp. 45-75).

37. Steven Weitzman ('Forced Circumcision and the Shifting Role of Gentiles in Hasmonean Ideology', *HTR* 92 [1999], pp. 37-59 [54-58]) argues that the Hasmoneans' propaganda on the forced conversion of the Idumeans was aimed at maintaining its status as a legitimate Judean regime in the eyes of its Judean subject, while they were recruiting Idumeans as mercenaries.

38. Berthelot, 'Judaism as "Citizenship"', pp. 119-20.

39. Youval Rotman, 'Between Ethnos and Populus: The Boundaries of Being a Jew', in Jonathan J. Price, Margalit Finkelberg and Yuval Shahar (eds.), *Rome: An Empire of Many Nations—New Perspectives on Ethnic Diversity and Cultural Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 203-22. In contrast, for the inappropriateness of the term *politeia* (used figuratively in Judean writings) in understanding the Judean constitutions of the Hellenistic period, see Katell Berthelot, *Jews and Their Roman Rivals: Pagan Rome's Challenge to Israel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), pp. 369-70.

40. Israel Shatzman, 'Jews and Gentiles from Judas Maccabaeus to John Hyrcanus According to Contemporary Jewish Sources', in Shaye J.D. Cohen and Joshua J. Schwartz (eds.), *Studies in Josephus and the Varieties of Ancient Judaism: Louis H. Feldman Jubilee Volume* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 237-70 (270).

41. Edward Dąbrowa, 'The Hasmoneans and the Religious Homogeneity of Their State', *SJC* 8 (2010), pp. 7-14 (12). The military expansion of Hyrcanus, which might have been propaganda too well-known for Josephus to dismiss from his audience, might not have happened (Kasher, *Jews, Idumaeans and Ancient Arabs*, pp. 44-78). The process of forming an alliance between the Judeans and Idumeans was mainly a diplomatic and peaceful one, with the Hasmonean and

this process, certain Idumeans might not have needed to perform the rite deliberately because male circumcision had already been a common practice among them.[42] The shared custom of the two ethnic groups functioned as a convenient symbol and reaffirmation of their brotherhood, traceable to their roots as the descendants of Jacob, the ancestor of Israel, and Esau, the ancestor of Edom.[43]

The cases above happened under special circumstances, rather than during the day-to-day living of peaceful times. In addition to their situational

Idumean elite playing a leading role for their political friendship (Seth Schwartz, 'Conversion to Judaism in the Second Temple Period: A Functionalist Approach', in Cohen and Schwartz [eds.], *Studies in Josephus and the Varieties of Ancient Judaism*, pp. 223-36 [232-33]).

42. Cohen (*Beginnings of Jewishness*, pp. 110-19) proposes that only the Idumeans in urban centres, such as Adora and Marisa, might have experienced more difficulty and political pressure because of their exposure to external cultural influences, which prompted them to abandon certain Idumean customs as in the case of some Judeans before the Maccabean revolt. Some Idumeans might have migrated elsewhere, as evidenced from a known Idumean colony in Egypt dating to the end of the second century BCE (see also Uriel Rappaport, 'Les Iduméens en Égypte', *RevPhil* 43 [1969], pp. 73-82; Dorothy J. Thompson Crawford, 'The Idumaeans of Memphis and the Ptolemaic *Politeumata'*, in *Atti del XVII Congresso Internazionale di Papirologia* [3 vols.; Naples: Centro Internazionale per lo Studio dei Papiri Ercolanesi, 1984], III, pp. 1069-75). The stone phalli uncovered there, which were circumcised, attests that the ancestral tradition of male circumcision was still observed by certain Idumeans during the Hellenistic period (Yigal Levin, 'The Religion of Idumea and Its Relationship to Early Judaism', *Religions* 11 [2020], pp. 1-27 [12-15]).

43. Even though the reference to this tradition by the Idumeans and Hasmoneans cannot be verified, Judeans' invention of a common ancestral linkage with non-Judeans, including the Arabs and Spartans, is not unknown (Eric S. Gruen, 'Fact and Fiction: Jewish Legends in a Hellenistic Context', in Paul Cartledge, Peter Garnsey and Erich S. Gruen [eds.], *Hellenistic Constructs: Essays in Culture, History, and Historiography* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997], pp. 72-88; Gruen, 'Kinship Relations and Jewish Identity', in Lee I. Levine and Daniel R. Schwartz [eds.], *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009], pp. 101-16). For the Edomite origin of the Idumeans, see John R. Bartlett, 'Edomites and Idumaeans', *PEQ* 131 (1999), pp. 102-14.

nature, the process was sudden and even hasty. Nevertheless, the majority of these instances, as discerned through the repetition of specific word choices, persistently exemplifies the Judean conceptualization that male circumcision constituted the key to conversion. Other Judean customs played a more ambiguous or, perhaps, a far less immediate and important role. With only a short notice, it was difficult for the potential proselytes to observe these customs, which required an extended period of learning via teaching and social interaction with Judeans, as well as time to put them into practice. At most, only a promise and agreement to observe them could be made, and it would have been difficult for the Judeans to monitor the progress. Only male circumcision could be executed immediately as an act that marked the change of one's status.

(Un)Monitored Conversion: Proselytes' Integration into and Disintegration from Judean Culture

After discussing the situational cases above, this section demonstrates that even during peaceful times, the conversion process and requirements were not uniform, with the exception of male circumcision, which continued to play a crucial role in conversion. This implies neither that the steps taken by proselytes were not treated seriously, nor that no other rules were observed. Josephus does present Judean laws and traditions to his Roman audience ideally as something worthy of respect. However, the extent to which the traditions, especially as presented by Josephus, were observed by proselytes and even Judeans, remains questionable. The superficial process of conversion is also not a sufficient indicator of whether proselytes would integrate into the Judean communities subsequently. Before further discussion below, we should note the different circumstances that the proselytes encountered in the diaspora and Judea. The proselytes in the diaspora, as diaspora Judeans did, continued to interact with non-Judeans, from which the proselytes constituted a part before or even after conversion. In contrast, the individuals whom proselytes encountered in Judea were mainly Judeans.

In Jerusalem, there are more traces that proselyte immigrants integrated into the local culture. A small number of ossuaries can be securely identified as those belonging to proselytes, given that the proselyte title is in-

scribed on them together with the names of the deceased.[44] As in the case of some diaspora Judeans, they moved to Jerusalem permanently because of its cultic significance. Some took pride in their status, with the proselyte title functioning as a significant indicator of their identities before and after they died.[45] Their attempt to integrate into the local society is reflected not only by their immigration to Jerusalem where the temple stood but also by the adoption of secondary burial in ossuaries, which was a peculiar cultural element in Judea proper.[46] These proselyte immigrants might have also adopted other customs, selectively or not, when they were still alive.

This integration process can be seen from the Adiabene family, as some of its significant members not only became proselytes but also resided in Jerusalem. Helena of Adiabene, renowned for her philanthropic endeavors akin to those of her sons Izates (*Ant*. 20.51-53) and Monabazus (*t. Pe'ah* 4.18), resided in Jerusalem where she adhered to the Nazarite rite. Her tomb was built in the style common to a contemporary Judean family tomb, but its size was at a much larger scale. It is apparent that other Adiabene aristocrats also moved to Jerusalem, as Josephus mentions that the Upper City housed the palaces of Monobazus (*War* 5.252) and Grapte (*War* 4.567).[47]

44. E.g. CIIP 1.1.174, 181, 190, 238, 304, 551. Although only a small number of epigraphic examples are identified, the number of proselytes among the permanent population in Jerusalem might have been more than that. Most ossuaries uncovered in Jerusalem are uninscribed. Some only include the names of the deceased. Some of these uninscribed ossuaries might have belonged to proselytes, given that their titles are not necessarily mentioned, just as not all immigrants from the diaspora indicated their names and geographical origins on their ossuaries. However, it would also be equally risky to assume that many of these uninscribed ossuaries belonged to proselytes, as there is a much higher chance that they belonged to other Judeans. Just as the number of burial caves and ossuaries cannot be a sufficient means to measure the population of Jerusalem, it is hard to reflect the number of proselytes buried there too.

45. Terence L. Donaldson, 'Jerusalem Ossuary Inscriptions and the Status of Jewish Proselytes', in Stephen G. Wilson and Michel Desjardins (eds.), *Text and Artifact in the Religions of Mediterranean Antiquity* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000), pp. 372-88.

46. The practice only spread to some other parts of the "greater Judea" from the second half of the first century CE onward.

47. The scales of these palaces are reflected by a big mansion uncovered on the northern side of the city of David (R. Steven Notley and Jeffrey P. García,

The Adiabene royals' participation in the revolt is also known, as Josephus describes the kinsmen of King Monobazus as two of the fiercest fighters in the ambush against Cestius at Beth Horon (*War* 6.356-357). The surrendered sons and brothers of King Izates were spared by Titus after their cause failed. The Tomb of the Kings was not only the burial site of Helena[48] but also of Adiabene aristocrats as evidenced from the *kokhim*, which were enough for burying far more than two individuals. A well-made tomb at Shu'afat might have housed the remains of the relatives of the Adiabene royal family. Puech reconstructs the fragmented inscription on the doorframe of a *kok* as εξωκιζωτον οστα [εν τω] μνιμι[ω βε]θ Ιζατω(ν) σ[υν? βεθ?] Η[λε]νις[της β]α[σει]λισ[σης] ('Ossements d'émigrés[*dans ce*] tombea[u, de la mais]on des Izatè[s, *avec la maison* (?) d'] Hé[lè]ne[, la r]e[i]n[e]'), which indicates that the deceased were related to King Izates of Adiabene and Queen Helena.[49] Hence, it can be inferred that the proselytes originating from Adiabene exhibited adherence to certain Judean customs, albeit in specific aspects.

Despite indications of assimilation, it is noteworthy that certain Judeans, even those in proximity to the proselytes, did not invariably hold elevated and stringent expectations of these newcomers. This is evident in the case of the Adiabene family mentioned earlier, where the Judean missionary did not impose an additional requirement of male circumcision upon them. In Josephus's version, Ananias and Helena expressed the wish to Izates that he

'Queen Adiabene's Jerusalem Palace—In a Parking Lot?', *BAR* 40 (2014), pp. 28-39, 62-65; Doron Ben-Ami and Yana Tchekhanovets, 'Has the Adiabene Royal Family "Palace" Been Found in the City of David?', in Katharina Galor and Gideon Avni (eds.), *Unearthing Jerusalem: 150 years of Archaeological Research in the Holy City* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), pp. 231-39.

48. It has also been suggested that the sarcophagus inscribed with the name *ṣdn* and *ṣdh* belonged to a female aristocrat of the royal household, probably a wife of Izates II or Monobazus II (Michał Marciak, *Izates, Helena, and Monobazos of Adiabene: A Study on Literary Traditions and History* [Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2014], pp. 153-54; Michał Marciak, 'Royal Converts from Adiabene and the Archaeology of Jerusalem', *Göttinger Forum für Altertumswissenschaft* 21 [2018], pp. 43-45) or a descendant of Helena (Andrew Lawler, 'Who Built the Tomb of the Kings?', *BAR* 47 [2021], pp. 30-38 [37]).

49. Émile Puech, 'Inscriptions d'un hypogée de Sha'fât et du tombeau des Rois', *RB* 118 (2011), pp. 321-30.

would not undergo the surgery of circumcision for safety's sake, but Izates still proceeded to do so[50] (*Ant*. 20.17–96). Josephus's Ananias claimed that it would be fine for him to continue to observe Judean customs without being circumcised. It meant that Izates could remain as a sympathizer.[51]

In both Josephus's and the rabbinic accounts of the same case where we find positive evidence of proselytes' adherence to Judean customs, male circumcision, however, remained the most crucial element in the conversion process. In *Gen*. *R*. 46.11, a subsequent text which does not carry the same historiographical significance as Josephus's works in the examination of the historical period, circumcision remains portrayed as a pivotal milestone. According to this account, the devout Adiabene brothers became aware of the significance of circumcision only after independently studying Gen. 17.11.[52] They thus asked the surgeon to circumcise them. In both cases,

50. See Nina Livesey, *Circumcision as a Malleable Symbol* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), pp. 35-40, for the narrative's purpose of recommending Izates's choice as the right one which brought about not only divine blessing but also the imitation of his example by other male members of the Adiabene household.

51. Daniel R. Schwartz ('God, Gentiles, and Jewish Law: On Acts 15 and Josephus' Adiabene Narrative', in Peter Schäfer [ed.], *Geschichte–Tradition–Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996], pp. 263-82 [265-72]) notices that in addition to the requirement of circumcision in this narrative, another point that distinguished a proselyte from a sympathizer was the target that they could worship. In Ananias's saying, Izates could worship θεός without being circumcised. Schwartz proposes that the proper understanding of θεός in this context should be "the Deity," which conveys the meaning of a universal god in an abstract way, rather than "the God," which refers to the Judean God. Similar usage can be found in the Lukan Paul's Areopagus speech, in which "deity" rather than "God" is used (Acts 17.23-30) and certain rabbinic references to righteous gentiles as the fearers of "Heaven" rather than of "God" (see also Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993], pp. 353-56). Thus, Schwartz argues that the one whom sympathizers could worship was not the Judean God but the universal deity, at least before they took the further step of male circumcision. Schwartz's proposal is only valid on the condition that Josephus's usage of θεός was precise and careful rather than sporadic.

52. See Lawrence H. Schiffman, 'The Conversion of the Royal House of Abiabene in Josephus and Rabbinic Sources', in Louis H. Feldman and Gohei Hata

Izates was in the process of learning. In one account, he realized the importance of the overlooked step of conversion from his Judean visitors, whereas in another, he went through a trial-and-error process of self-learning together with his brother. The texts reflect that those learning about the Judean cult had a chance to miss something, even the key step of conversion. Therefore, knowing the details of Judean customs and observing them, except for male circumcision, was not necessarily a prerequisite of conversion. Both texts also reflect that the Adiabene rulers' knowledge of the Judean cult and customs was limited, even when they were attempting to acquire more. They were accepted as proselytes despite their limited knowledge. Without undergoing the determinative step of circumcision, no matter how well one understood the Judean cult and customs and diligently observed them, it would be doubtful if a non-Judean male would be recognized as a proselyte.

Certainly, it would be misleading to argue that male circumcision was always the only Judean custom that proselytes adopted. Queen Helena is known in a rabbinic source (*m*. *Nazir* 3.6) for her observance of the Nazarite vow. A custom that some proselytes adopted was making a pilgrimage trip to Jerusalem and offering a sacrifice at the temple there, as some diaspora Judeans also did. However, making a pilgrimage was still not a marker of being a proselyte. Some sympathizers who remained as non-Judeans did the same, though the proselytes did so as a demonstration of their observance of this aspect of the Judean custom and their commitment to the Judean cult. Moreover, not all proselytes made pilgrimages to Jerusalem or had a chance to do so. Even without a trip to Jerusalem, the status of proselytes among their local Judean fellows did not diminish, as it is obvious that most diaspora Judeans also did not visit Jerusalem, even once during their lifetime, due to the expenses of travel, ability to leave behind work for an extended period and the danger of the journey. Just as the variation in the observance of Judean traditions among native-born diaspora Judeans was considerable,[53] the degree to which proselytes adhered to other Judean customs would have also fluctuated depending on individual cases and community contexts. Only male circumcision still marked the change of one's status, no

(eds.), *Josephus, Judaism, and Christianity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), pp. 293-312 (301-2).

53. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, pp. 320-35.

matter how few proselytes practiced Judean customs because sympathizers could have also done so,[54] only without being circumcised.

The challenges associated with maintaining one's conversion are evident not only during the process of becoming a proselyte but also in the process of getting out, as evidenced from Josephus's admittance of this (*Apion* 2.123).[55] Despite the painful process of circumcision, some proselytes gave up their conversion. Some of the Herodian princesses' marriage partners or potential ones, who were non-Judean rulers and aristocrats, even refused the request by the Herodian family to be circumcised as a prerequisite for marriage. Their conversion would pose difficulties for their relationship with their families and ethnic groups, as in the case of Syllaeus (*Ant*. 16.225), if their new status became exposed. It is apparent for Izates of Adiabene, whose commitment was by no means a superficial one. His change of status and abandonment of ancestral customs aroused the anger of his kingdom's aristocrats, who were plotting with Vologases of Parthia to overthrow the king (*Ant*. 20.81-91), even though Josephus's emphasis on the divine protection over the faithful ones to God and punishment over the wicked[56] might have hinted at the exaggeration of the disturbance in the kingdom.[57]

54. Folker Siegert, 'Gottesfürchtige und Sympathisanten', *JSJ* 4 (1973), pp. 107-64; Bernd Wander, *Gottesfürchtige und Sympathisanten: Studien zum Heidnischen Umfeld von Diasporasynagogen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998).

55. See Donaldson, *Judaism and the Gentiles*, pp. 347-48 and John M.G. Barclay, *Flavius Josephus. Translation and Commentary—Vol. 19: Against Apion. Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 232-33 (233 n. 447) for the reasons why the ones whom Josephus refers to here should be identified as proselytes rather than sympathizers.

56. Steve Mason, 'The *Contra Apionem* in Social and Literary Context: An Invitation to Judean Philosophy', in Louis H. Feldman and John R. Levison (eds.), *Josephus' Contra Apionem: Studies in its Character and Context with a Latin Concordance to the Portion Mission in Greek* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 187-228 (205-7).

57. Jacob Neusner ('The Conversion of Adiabene to Judaism: A New Perspective', *JBL* 83 [1964], pp. 60-66) even argues that the story was propaganda aimed at attracting Judeans to turn to the Adiabene family as their new and appropriate ruler, in case there would be a war against Rome. See also Edith M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule from Pompey to Diocletian: A Study in Political Relations* (Leiden: Brill, 2001 [1976]), p. 417, which also claims that the text might have

Returning to the Herodian marriage partners, there arises uncertainty regarding their long-term commitment to fulfilling the obligations, even if the focus of observances were limited to a select few customs. A promise to follow other long-term customs was not easy to fulfil, or it might have just been lip service to the Herodian family. To maintain their roles in their own ethnic groups, proselytes would have to follow their ancestral customs associated with their native deities. Such continuity was not compatible with the Judean customs and monotheistic traditions, even though these Judean rules might have also been compromised by some Judeans, especially those living among the non-Judean majority in the diaspora. Although some of them agreed to be circumcised, one can only wonder as to what extent other Judean customs were observed by them. The performance of male circumcision, which might have been the only one-time rite that was relatively quick to execute, was thus not necessarily a guarantee that other Judean customs were adopted.

The marriage partners' agreements were partly aimed at satisfying the Herodian family, at least before the marriage was in effect. Their conversion might have also been Herodian propaganda for presenting a positive image among its Judean subjects, who would not have known of how these male proselytes lived afterwards. It is suspect that the Herodian family imposed stringent requirements on or held high expectations for their marriage partners, given the evidence of some Herodian family members disregarding Judean marriage laws and other customs. It is obvious that not all marriage partners of the Herodian princesses became proselytes, and thus one can hardly imagine that the requirements of circumcision and other rites were applied consistently. Of greater significance to the Herodian family and their marriage partners was the establishment and preservation of political alliances through marital bonds, as a social-political mechanism to reinforce friendship and kinship ties.[58]

The superficial process can be explained by the scanty number of proselytes and the limited amount of Judean attention on them and proselytization. The insignificant number of these individuals did not prompt the Judeans to consider them further. There was not a strong advocacy to for-

been an attempt to gain the support of the Judeans in Parthia and Judea for Adiabene's political plan against Parthia.

58. Arnold H.M. Jones, *The Greek City from Alexander to Justinian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), p. 258; Schwartz, 'Conversion to Judaism', pp. 233-35.

mulate regulations for proselytes in a way that would appeal to other Judeans. This subject pertains to the 1990s debate regarding the existence of a general interest among Judeans in proselytizing, with Feldman attributing the notable increase in the Judean population within the Roman Empire to active proselytism.[59] I do not intend to repeat the bases behind both sides and the counterarguments against one another. Nonetheless, I aim to elaborate further on Mt. 23.15, where the Matthean Jesus critiques the Pharisaic zeal for proselytizing, a key text in the scholarly discussion regarding the scale of the proselyte population and the Judeans' interest in proselytization.[60] The specific meaning of proselytizing here has raised intense scholarly debates with proposals that it means the conversion of non-Judeans[61] or sympathizers[62] or even the recruitment of new members, including

59. For an affirmative answer, see e.g. Louis H. Feldman, 'Was Judaism a Missionary Religion in Ancient Times?', in Menachem Mor (ed.), *Jewish Assimilation, Acculturation and Accommodation* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1992), pp. 24-37; Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, pp. 288-341; James Carleton Paget, 'Jewish Proselytism at the Time of Christian Origins: Chimera or Reality?', *JSNT* 62 (1996), pp. 65-103; Peter Borgen, 'Proselytes, Conquest, and Mission', in Peter Borgen, Vernon K. Robbins and David B. Gowler (eds.), *Recruitment, Conquest, and Conflict: Strategies in Judaism, Early Christianity and the Graeco-Roman World* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), pp. 57-77; Borgen, *Early Christianity and Hellenistic Judaism* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), pp. 45-69. For the opposite view that such interest did not exist, see e.g. Scot McKnight, *A Light among the Gentiles: Jewish Missionary Activity in the Second Temple Period* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991); Riesner, 'Pre-Christian Jewish Mission'; Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Significance of Yavneh and Other Essays in Jewish Hellenism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), pp. 299-308; Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion: Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 60-90.

60. Michael F. Bird ('The Case of Proselytizing Pharisees?—Matthew 23:15', *JSHJ* 2 [2004], pp. 117-37 [132]) argues that the text was critical toward the negative results rather than the practice of making converts.

61. Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, p. 18; Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, p. 298.

62. McKnight, *Light Among the Gentiles*, pp. 106-8; Paul W. Barnett, 'Jewish Mission in the Era of the New Testament and the Apostle Paul', in Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson (eds.), *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul's Mission*

Judeans and non-Judeans, to the Pharisaic group through the adoption of the Pharisaic halakha.[63] The term *travelling on land and sea* may be an idiom meaning completeness,[64] but it may also refer to a specific event through which the Pharisees earned a negative fame in this aspect.[65] Even if we do not endorse these arguments, the text still conveys the notion that the number of proselytes was limited, a point that resonated effectively with both the author and the intended audience. The text also does not demonstrate a general interest among Judeans in proselytizing. It only speaks of the Pharisees, or even a small number of enthusiasts among them, as the negative representative of the Matthean enemies.

Even if there was, indeed, a Pharisaic fervor for proselytizing, it does not necessarily imply that the limited number of proselytes would have advocated for the formalization of more stringent conversion requirements or greater demands on the proselytes. The Adiabene family mentioned previously, whose dedication to Judean cult and traditions was evident, did not represent an exceptional case in which the Judeans demonstrated extraordinary tolerance and compromise solely due to their royal background and status. A similar attitude toward commoners of far lower social status can be found even in Judean writings after 70 CE. The loose expectations are reflected in the rabbinic texts regarding the acceptance of proselytes by Hillel and the post-70s sages. In one version (*b. Šabb.* 31), Hillel accepted three strange seekers, including one who rejected the Oral Torah, one who sought

(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), pp. 263-83 (272); Bird, 'Case of Proselytizing Pharisees?'.

63. Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*, pp. 69-72; Alan F. Segal, 'The Cost of Proselytism and Conversion', in David J. Lull (ed.), *SBL 1988: Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), pp. 336-69 (341-44); Thomas M. Finn, *From Death to Rebirth: Ritual and Conversion in Antiquity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), pp. 90-104; David E. Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), p. 131; Irina Levinskaya, *The Book of Acts in its Diaspora Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 36-39; Edouard Will and Claude Orrieux, *"Prośelytisme Juif"? Histoire d'une Erreur* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1992), pp. 123-36.

64. W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume III* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), p. 298.

65. John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), p. 934.

to learn the entire Torah while standing on one foot, and one who expressed the ambition to become a priest. In *'Abot R. Nat*. A.15, Hillel took a more prudent step by teaching them the proper view first before accepting them, in contrast to Shammai, who immediately dismissed them for their perceived absurdities. There is certainly an ironic element behind these texts, but the stories also reflect that, as in the accounts of the Adiabene family, some sages were more patient and open-minded toward the steps of conversion despite the potential proselytes' shaky understandings, which could be corrected through teaching.[66]

As seen from the loose requirements above, it was not always difficult for a non-Judean male to become a proselyte, as long as he could bear the surgical pain. The observance of other customs depended partly on the Judean community with whom the proselytes were associated and partly on the proselytes' own determination and willingness for integration.[67] It is expected that the Judean communities in the diaspora, where most proselytes lived, played a role in monitoring and guiding the proselytes as reflected in certain texts from the rabbinic sources. However, this might have been a rabbinic ideal. In particular, since there were also diverse perspectives and levels of observance of Judean customs among the Judeans in the diaspora,[68] it is not surprising that they also had different expectations and levels of tolerance toward the proselytes among them, ranging from mini-

66. Yitzhak Buxbaum, *The Life and Teachings of Hillel* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008), p. 136; William G. Braude, *Jewish Proselyting in the First Five Centuries of the Common Era: The Age of the Tannaim and Amoraim* (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1940), pp. 11-13.

67. This process could be long and slow if it ever happened to a proselyte. It is also noted in rabbinic texts that male circumcision was not a sufficient means to reflect the Judeanness of a proselyte (Gary G. Porton, *The Stranger within your Gates: Converts and Conversion in Rabbinic Literature* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994], pp. 196-200), despite its indispensable role as a marker of conversion (Korbinian Spann, 'The Meaning of Circumcision for Strangers in Rabbinic Literature', in Benedikt Eckhardt [ed.], *Jewish Identity and Politics between Maccabees and Bar Kokhba: Groups, Normativity, and Rituals* [Leiden: Brill, 2012], pp. 225-42 [233-42]).

68. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, pp. 320-35.

mal[69] to strict requirements. To a certain extent, the requirements and expectations for proselytes were confined to their location[70] because a significant way that proselytes learnt about the Judean customs and practices they should adopt was through their social interactions with the local Judean communities.[71] Local factors and concerns, which could vary from place to place, thus intertwined with the wider but still limited consensus on Judean laws and traditions associated with conversion.

In certain cases, there might not have been conflicts between the proselyte status and their original ethnic identities, except for high-profile individuals like the Herodian consorts mentioned above, who were expected to play a leading role in the cultic activities in their families and communities. Proselytes did not necessarily need to make the choice of keeping only one identity and abandoning the other, especially since ethnic identities were fluid in antiquity in that one could change from being a member of an ethnic group to another, or even embrace multiple ethnic identities.[72] A notable example is that of the Idumeans,[73] who were still known and identifiable as

69. It is not surprising that the Alexandrian Judeans, whom Philo (*Migr. Abr.* 89-105) criticized for over-allegorizing male circumcision as if the physical practice was no longer needed, might have accepted non-Judeans as proselytes without circumcision (David C. Sim, 'Gentiles, God-Fearers and Proselytes', in David C. Sim and James S. McLaren [eds.], *Attitudes to Gentiles in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* [London: T. & T. Clark, 2013], pp. 9-27 [20]). Nevertheless, such an extreme case was not as common in the Judean circles as proposed by Neil J. McEleney ('Conversion, Circumcision and the Law', *NTS* 20 [1974], pp. 319-41), whose argument is persuasively refuted by John Nolland ('Uncircumcised Proselytes?', *JSJ* 12 [1981], pp. 173-94).

70. Sim, 'Gentiles, God-Fearers and Proselytes', p. 21.

71. Catherine Hezser, *Jewish Literacy in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), p. 4.

72. On the other hand, different wordings could be used to refer to the same identity (David G. Horrell, *Ethnicity and Inclusion: Religion, Race, and Whiteness in Constructions of Jewish and Christian Identities* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020], p. 273).

73. Katell Berthelot (*In Search of the Promised Land? The Hasmonean Dynasty between Biblical Models and Hellenistic Diplomacy* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018], pp. 298-304) argues that Idumeans were treated by the Hasmoneans as residential aliens mentioned in the Pentateuch, because their

such long after becoming a part of the Judean state, though not without resistance from some individuals such as Costobar.[74] Some Judeans also possessed the identities of other ethnic groups, too. It would not have been surprising that one identity was emphasized more than others in different contexts.

Imagining the Proselytes

Although some non-Judeans came closer to the Judeans by becoming proselytes or considering becoming one, some Judean texts still express negative views toward them. Scholarly discourse extensively examines the Judeans' rejection of and preoccupation with proselytes. Within this section, a proposition is put forth that suggests such reactions towards the group could have been influenced by the adoption and perpetuation of imaginative stereotypes, rather than being firmly rooted in substantial interaction and experience. Imageries concerning the characteristics of both individuals and

integration into the Israelite community through their residency and adoption of Israelite custom would not 'convert' them into Israelites.

74. The inclusion of multiple identities and cultures was seen as a disturbance to some Idumeans. Costobar attempted to revive the traditional Idumean culture (Josephus, *Ant*. 15.253), especially the political and cultic prominence of the native deity Qos (Collin Cornell, 'The Costobar Affair: Comparing Idumaism and Early Judaism', *JJMJS* 7 [2020], pp. 93-115). The political support behind Costobar is noteworthy. He had established a network of powerful figures, such as the sons of Baba, who might have been Idumeans (Eliezer D. Oren and Uriel Rappaport, 'The Necropolis of Maresha-Beth Govrin', *IEJ* 34 [1984], pp. 114-53; Nikos Kokkinos, *The Herodian Dynasty: Origins, Role in Society and Eclipse* [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998], p. 180). They were known as Herod's enemies (Josephus, *Ant*. 15.260-266; Israel Ronen, 'Appendix B: Formation of Jewish Nationalism among the Idumaeans', in Aryeh Kasher, *Jews, Idumaeans and Ancient Arabs: Relations of the Jews in Eretz-Israel with Nations of the Frontier and the Desert during the Hellenistic and Roman Era [332 BCE–70 CE]* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988], pp. 214-39 [214-20]). Another source of support was the Idumeans at Memphis who might have served as the main connection between Costobar and Cleopatra (Adam K. Marshak, 'Rise of the Idumaeans: Ethnicity and Politics in Herod's Judea', in Eckhardt [ed.] *Jewish Identity and Politics*, pp. 125-29 [125 n. 26]).

groups can evolve even in the absence of real interactions. Even though interactions were not altogether absent in some cases, imagination still played a role in the socially constructed ideas about proselytes. Benedict Anderson's term "imagined communities"[75] has been widely borrowed in sociological and historical studies for not only nationalists but also for a wide range of groups who have conceptualized themselves and their others. This term is used here to refer to the imaginative characteristics of the proselytes in the Judean minds.

Among the long-noted diverse perspectives toward גרים in texts uncovered in Qumran, some of them negatively draw a comparison of the different statuses between גרים and the native-born to reflect either the unacceptability of גרים or their inferior status to that of the native-born. The Temple Scroll (11QT 39.5 and 40.6) indicates that the area beyond the women's court of the temple[76] was accessible by גרים of the fourth generation.[77] Thus, it also implies that גרים encountered more restrictions up to the third generation, in the way that their status was not equal to that of the native-

75. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2016 [1983]).

76. For the courtyards in the temple according to the Temple Scroll, see e.g. Francis Schmidt, *How the Temple Thinks: Identity and Social Cohesion in Ancient Judaism* (trans. J. Edward Crowley; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), pp. 181-84; Lawrence H. Schiffman, 'Architecture and Law: The Temple and its Courtyards in the Temple Scroll', in Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs and Nahum M. Sarna (eds.), *From Ancient Israel to Modern Judaism: Intellect in Quest of Understanding—Essays in Honor of Marvin Fox* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), pp. 267-84; Johann Maier, 'The Architectural History of the Temple in Jerusalem in the Light of the Temple Scroll', in George J. Brooke (ed.), *Temple Scroll Studies: Papers Presented at the International Symposium on the Temple Scroll—Manchester, December 1987* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), pp. 23-62; Yigael Yadin, *The Temple Scroll: The Hidden Law of the Dead Sea Sect* (New York: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1985), pp. 163-69; Mathias Delcor, 'Is the Temple Scroll a Source of the Herodian Temple?', in George. J. Brooke (ed.), *Temple Scroll Studies: Papers Presented at the International Symposium on the Temple Scroll* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), pp. 67-89.

77. The words preceding 'fourth generation' in 11QT 40.6 are unreadable because of the quality of the manuscript's preservation. The reconstruction of the wordings relies on 11QT 39.5 and Gen. 15:16 (Yadin, *Temple Scroll*, p. 170 n. 6 and Maier, 'Architectural History', p. 102).

born, at least to the extent that one could enter the hierarchically defined temple area. From the perspective of the Temple Scroll, descent plays a determinative role in defining one's status, which was not transformable through rites.[78] The difference of status could only be reduced if the descendants of גרים continued to remain among the Judeans until several generations later. In other words, from this point of view, the integration and acceptance of גרים into the Judean community would be a much longer progress than their consent to rites which were performable in a relatively shorter duration of time. 4QFlorilegium 1.4 is even stricter than the Temple Scroll, in the sense that גרים were forbidden into the temple.[79] Time was no longer a means to elevate the status of גרים. More seriously, they were

78. Daniel R. Schwartz, 'On Two Aspects of a Priestly View of Descent at Qumran', in Lawrence H. Schiffman (ed.), *Archaeology and History in the Dead Sea Scrolls: The New York University Conference in Memory of Yigael Yadin* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), pp. 157-79; Schwartz, 'Ends Meet: Qumran and Paul on Circumcision', in Jean-Sébastien Rey (ed.), *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Pauline Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 295-307 (298-304). The same can be said about the perspective of *Jubilees* toward male circumcision. Comparing the newborn Isaac, the thirteen-year-old Ishmael and other foreigners in the household of Abraham, *Jub*. 15 conveys the sense that only those being circumcised on the eighth day after birth were included in the covenant (Matthew Thiessen, *Contesting Conversion: Genealogy, Circumcision, and Identity in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], pp. 67-86).

79. In contrast, only Ammonites, Moabites and bastards are mentioned in 4QMMT B39-49 (Lawrence H. Schiffman, 'The Place of 4QMMT in the Corpus of Qumran Manuscripts', in John Kampen and Moshe J. Bernstein [eds.], *Reading 4QMMT: New Perspectives on Qumran Law and History* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996], pp. 81-98). Contrasting the eschatological temple, the historical one and a 'temple of man', 4QFlor 1.1-13 refers to different temples, with 1.5-6 referring to the גרים desolating a temple of Israel (Devorah Dimant , '4QFlorilegium and the Idea of the Community as Temple', in André Caquot, Mireille Hadas-Lebel and Jean Riaud [eds.], *Hellenica et Judaica: Hommage à Valentin Nikiprowetzky* [Leuven: Peeters, 1986], pp. 165-89; Michael Owen Wise, '4QFlorilegium and the Temple of Adam', *RQ* 15 [1991], pp. 103-32 [107-10]; Roland Deines, 'Die Abwehr der Fremden in den Texten aus Qumran: Zum Verständnis der Fremdenfeindlichkeit in der Qumrangemeinde', in Reinhard Feldmeier and Ulrich Heckel [eds.], *Die Heiden: Juden, Christen und das Problem des Fremden* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994], pp. 59-91 [79-80]).

put alongside some abhorrible groups, including bastards, foreigners, Ammonites and Moabites. The last two groups, according to Deut. 23.3, were forbidden to become a part of Israel forever. This way of describing גרים in a negative light can also be seen in Pesher Nahum (4Q169) 3-4 II 9, which associates גרים with negative descriptions such as the simple ones of Ephraim, falsehood, lies and deceit. More linear perspectives can be found in CD 14.3-4, which, in contrast to 4QFlorilegium, mentions that גרים constitute a part of the Israelite community, with a fourth rank status after the priests, Levites and Israelites. In another part of CD (6.21), it closely follows the Deuteronomistic perspective that גרים, together with the poor and needy, were able to receive help from the Israelites as if this inferior group was also under the legal governance of the laws.[80] The status of being גרים, along with other factors that were also relevant to native-born individuals, was taken into consideration during the process of acceptance.[81]

Certainly, it is disputable whether the גר in the texts above[82] means proselyte or, following the sense in the Hebrew Bible, residential alien who

80. George J. Brooke, *Exegesis at Qumran: 4QFlorilegium in its Jewish Context* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985), pp. 180-81. In contrast, 1QS 2.19-21 only mentions the priests, Levites and 'all the people', which might have meant 'lay members' (Elisha Qimron and James H. Charlesworth, 'Rule of the Community [1QS; cf. 4QS MSS A–J, 5Q11]', in James H. Charlesworth [ed.], *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Texts with English Translations—Volume 1. Rule of the Community and Related Documents* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996], pp. 1-51 [11 n. 35]). Lawrence H. Schiffman (*The Courtyards of the House of the Lord: Studies on the Temple Scroll* [ed. Florentino García Martínez; Leiden: Brill, 2008], pp. 384-86) attempts to harmonize the differences between 1QS and CD by proposing that 1QS targeted the Qumran community, and CD's targeted audience were the members residing in urban settlements where proselytes were present. Jutta Jokiranta ('Conceptualizing *Ger* in the Dead Sea Scrolls', in de Troyer, Law and Liljeström [eds.], *In the Footsteps of Sherlock Holmes*, pp. 659-77) argues that, despite the silence of 1QS on גרים, it did not mean that they were rejected, just as one cannot conclude that other categories of individuals and ritual activities were excluded from the community because they are not mentioned in a text.

81. Jokiranta, 'Conceptualizing *Ger*'.

82. For other occurrences of גר in Qumran texts, see Carmen Palmer, *Converts in the Dead Sea Scrolls: The Gēr and Mutable Ethnicity* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), pp. 55-126; Carmen Palmer, 'Mutable Ethnicity in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Intertwined Acts of Tolerance and Intolerance', in Michael Labahn and Outi Lethipuu

lived among the Israelites.[83] If the latter is the case, then the usage is less directly related to the topic we are dealing with, except for the openness and exclusiveness of the Israelite community and its temple to those who were not necessarily viewed as outsiders or non-integrable groups by other Judeans.

Such exclusive perspectives were not limited to the texts above. The view of Josephus's Simon in the Jerusalem context (*Ant*. 19.332-334), as Schwartz notices, is similar to those expressed in the Temple Scroll and 4QFlorilegium in that social mobility via conversion was denied. Simon was opposed to Agrippa I's entry to the temple on the basis that the king was not native-born,[84] even though Agrippa I was the descendant of a

(eds.), *Tolerance, Intolerance, and Recognition in Early Christianity and Early Judaism* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021), pp. 47-72 (54-65).

83. For example, Michael Owen Wise (*A Critical Study of the Temple Scroll from Qumran Cave* [Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1990], pp. 168-75; Wise, 'The Eschatological Vision of the Temple Scroll', *JNES* 49 [1990], pp. 155-72 [169-72]; cf. Dimant, '4QFlorilegium', pp. 168-75) argues that the texts uncovered in Qumran convey diverse meanings for the term גר, indicating that גר in 4QFlorilegium means residential alien and the occurrence in the Temple Scroll refers to proselyte. This reasoning is based on the assumption that the Temple Scroll also initially understood the meaning of גר as residential alien but developed it further to proselyte, who possessed a higher status. Katell Berthelot ('La notion de גר dans les texts de Qumrân', *RQ* 19 [1999], pp. 171-216) sees the continuity in most Qumran texts of the biblical concept that permitted the integration of a גר into Israel. A divergence from it appears in 4QFlorilegium, which understood גר as proselyte and rejected the biblical principle of the acceptance of stranger. Joseph M. Baumgarten ('Proselytes', in Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam [eds.], *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Vol. 2* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000], pp. 700-701), in contrast, assumes that the גר in the Qumran texts discussed here refers to a proselyte, without further supporting his claim. For a survey of the debate, see Palmer, *Converts*, pp. 16-23.

84. Daniel R. Schwartz, *Agrippa I* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1990), pp. 124-30. In Niese's translation, Agrippa was refused entry because of his descent and inappropriate behaviour, but Schwartz points out Niese's error of changing εὐγενέσι(ν) or ἐγγενέσιν to εὐαγέσιν. Thus, the word for the king's well-born or native status is misunderstood as being related to his behaviour. This mishandled word and its translation is subsequently adopted for explaining the inappropriate behaviour as Agrippa I's theatregoing, which violated Judean custom. Schwartz cor-

proselyte.[85] The setting of Simon's story was not only an urban one but also a pilgrimage destination where proselytes were present.[86] Nevertheless, the narrative reflects that among certain Judeans in Jerusalem, genealogy still became the prime target for making an allegation against an individual's status. These factors played a more important role in determining a person's membership in the Judean community than the efforts he made to become a proselyte and maintain the proselyte identity.[87] To Simon, what he deemed to be the norm could not be changed through the infiltration of those who did not fall into the categorical distinction by birth. The attachment to the Judean constitution, including one's right to enter the temple, was a status only inherited through birth. While exclusive perspectives might have partly derived from the real experience of dealing with proselytes, stereotypes could still be formed and reinforced through imagination.

rects Niese's translation and pinpoints that the text has nothing to do with misbehaviour, let alone theatregoing.

85. It depends on whether the counting starts from Antipater I or Herod the Great.

86. The Judeans in Jerusalem, including pilgrims and residents, had a good chance to encounter proselytes because of the nature of Jerusalem as a pilgrimage city. However, during the festivals, when the city was filled with pilgrims, it would be difficult to identify a proselyte in the crowd, unless proselytes indicated their identities themselves. As Shaye J.D. Cohen ('"Those Who Say They Are Jews and Are Not": How Do You Know a Jew in Antiquity When You See One?', in Shaye J.D. Cohen and Ernest S. Frerichs [eds.], *Diaspora in Antiquity* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993], pp. 1-45) and Itzhak F. Fikhman ('The Physical Appearance of Egyptian Jews According to the Greek Papyri', *SCI* 18 [1999], pp. 131-38 [135-36]) argue, diaspora Judeans dressed similarly to those non-Judeans from which they came. In many cases, the interactions between the native-born and proselytes might have been limited to some quick conversations, including enquiries of directions, business transactions and casual talks, that might not have necessarily helped the locals to identify a proselyte.

87. See Christine Hayes, 'Intermarriage and Impurity in Ancient Jewish Sources', *HTR* 92 (1999), pp. 3-36; Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) for the Judean texts which share the perspective on non-Judeans' genealogical impurity not being purifiable through any means.

The perspectives of Simon, the Temple Scroll and 4QFlorilgium are related to the regulation of the Temple Mount platform,[88] in which access to different courtyards was controlled. The temple inscription also mentions that ἀλλογενής was forbidden to go further from the defined area and that trespassers would be punished.[89] These texts thus reflect that there were different interpretations among Judeans on what ἀλλογενής meant. In addition to non-Judeans, some Judeans might have considered proselytes, or their descendants up to certain generations, to also fall within this category. The temple inscription does not define ἀλλογενής further, assuming the readers would have known what it meant.[90] The perspectives were not necessarily based on the interpretations of this inscription, as the date of the inscription might have come relatively late during the Herodian period, after the proposed dates of the aforementioned documents. However, it is not surprising that different understandings of this inscription proliferated after it was set up, with some of these ideas being based on actual experience in dealing with proselytes, whether positive or negative imagination, or both.

This narrow view, despite Schwartz describing it as a priestly one,[91] lacked the ideological attractiveness to gain a wider acceptance among Judeans, including the ruling priests, who requested that Simon bar Giora protect Jerusalem, presumably including the temple, from John Gischala during the first revolt (*War* 4.570-576). The name Giora as the transliteration of the Aramaic גיורא reflects his identity as the descendant of a proselyte. The validity of the priestly view can be further doubted by the fact that

88. See Martin Goodman, 'Religious Variety and the Temple in the Late Second Temple Period and its Aftermath', in Sacha Stern (ed.), *Sects and Sectarianism in Jewish History* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 21-37 (26-33) for different Judean perspectives on the ways of running the temple.

89. See Peretz Segal, 'The Penalty of the Warning Inscription from the Temple of Jerusalem', *IEJ* 39 (1989), pp. 79-84 for the divine authority of priests to punish trespassers.

90. In the Septuagint (e.g. Ezek. 44.9; Lev. 22.25; Exod. 12.43; Isa. 56.3, 6), the term clearly means a foreigner (Solomon Zeitlin, 'The Warning Inscription of the Temple', *JQR* 38 [1947], pp. 111-16 [115-16]), but it is uncertain whether the usage of the term in the temple inscription derived from the Septuagint (Stephen R. Llewelyn and Dionysia van Beek, 'Reading the Temple Warning as a Greek Visitor', *JSJ* 42 [2011], pp. 1-22 [17]).

91. Schwartz, *Agrippa I*, pp. 124-30.

not even Josephus, who was a priest, used Simon's descent, a conveniently picked up aspect, to criticize this opponent. Even though it is uncertain whether his ancestry can be traced back to the first proselyte of his family, his status did not become an obstacle for him to gain acceptance from his Judean fellows, including the priests. Josephus (*War* 5.309) highlights his followers' loyalty, evident in their willingness to die upon his request. His commitment to the Judean revolt is further evidenced from the copper coins minted with 'year four of the redemption of Zion', which might have been issued by Simon as Kanael proposes.[92] His conquest of the Davidic capital of Hebron (*War* 4.529-534) and his kingly clothing in white tunics and purple cape (*War* 7.29-31) while he was captured in the temple also reflect his aspiration to become a Judean king.[93] In contrast to the rejection of Agrippa I by Josephus's Simon, it is not surprising that other Judeans would accept proselytes or their descendants as kings. After all, Herod was also a proselyte. He and his descendants had ruled for almost a century. From the evidence presented here, it seems that the Judeans who viewed Simon bar Giora negatively because of his status as the descendant of a proselyte were also those who shared the narrow, negative and imaginative perspectives found in the Temple Scroll and 4QFlorilegium. As seen from his popularity, it is safe to conclude that those holding this 'priestly perspective' belonged to a minority.

Not all of the Judeans' views on the proselytes can be described as long-term perspectives. Instead, certain cases in which an emphasis on descent was suddenly triggered point to their temporary and situational nature. In particular, one's descent was an easy target to appropriate for criticism, even though the real reasons for criticism were, in fact, other matters. An example is Antigonus's criticism of Herod as a half-Judean due to his Idumean descent (*Ant*. 14.403), the context being that the Judean public denied him from entering Jerusalem. However, it does not mean that these views were held consistently among the Judeans, even by those who criticized him as such. This view might have derived from within the political context of the power struggle for the Judean kingship. In order to stop the

92. Baruch Kanael, 'The Historical Background of the Coins "Year Four … of the Redemption of Zion"', *BASOR* 129 (1953), pp. 18-20.

93. Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999 [1985]), pp. 119-27.

Judean throne from being conferred on Herod, Antigonus hoped to persuade the Romans by diverting their focus from Herod's achievements to his ancestry.[94] In other contexts, Herod acted as a Judean ruler, or this aspect of his identity was emphasized for other reasons, while his identity as a proselyte or the descendant of one played only a minimum role. In his attempt to persuade the Judean public to rebuild the temple, he, as a Judean king, delivered a speech that emphasized the benefits of the building project for the Judeans and their ancestral cult (*Ant*. 15.382-387). In the debate over the ownership of Caesarea Maritima, the Judean residents there, for their own political advantages, argued against their non-Judean fellows for the Judean ownership of the city on the basis that Herod, the city's founder, was a Judean (*War* 2.266-270). Such claim was betrayed by the fact that Herod intended to build a non-Judean city, which is obviously reflected through the city's name, the imperial cult centre and other facilities. Therefore, different aspects of the very same person's identities were perceived, ignored and emphasized in various circumstances.[95] The views on an individual's status could be triggered temporarily for a short-term reason.

Conclusion

There were variations among the proselytes in Judea and their conversion during the Late Second Temple period, including the ambiguity and clarity of the rites involved. The obscurity of certain rites is attested in Josephus's writings, when he speaks of the proselytes' adoption of Judean customs without specifying further what they were. The only ritual practice that he clearly spells out is male circumcision. In the known cases of both forced conversion in turbulent moments and voluntary conversion during peaceful times, circumcision played a determinative role in marking the change of a non-Judean male's status to that of a proselyte. Other laws and customs could hardly be executed immediately after conversion. In some cases, the potential proselytes' knowledge of Judean laws and customs was not a prerequisite of their conversion. In the examples during the Hasmonean con-

94. Benedikt Eckhardt, '"An Idumean, That Is, a Half-Jew": Hasmoneans and Herodians Between Ancestry and Merit', in Eckhardt [ed.] *Jewish Identity and Politics*, pp. 91-115.

95. Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness*, p. 23.

quest and the first revolt, the forced proselytes had no chance to learn them. The evidence reveals a certain level of flexibility, wherein non-Judeans converted as proselytes even during peaceful periods, without an absolute requirement to possess extensive knowledge of Judean traditions. Additionally, the Judean communities they integrated into did not necessarily expect these converts to strictly adhere to a wide array of Judean customs, except perhaps for some essential principles.

While some proselytes demonstrated such exceptional piety that their memory persisted in Judean writings, the superficial nature of certain conversions becomes evident in their post-conversion outcomes. The rites observed by some proselytes after conversion were selective and limited probably to some customs that were widely known as the Judean ethnic markers. Not all cases reflect Philo's rigid ideal that proselytes uprooted themselves from their pre-conversion traditions and family ties, just as diaspora Judeans also embraced the local cultures in their predominantly non-Judean surroundings and functioned as a part of the local societies in different ways without alienating themselves from everything that seemed to be non-Judean.[96] In the extremity, a non-Judean male could hastily become a proselyte by observing a minimum of Judean rites, as long as he could bear the pain of circumcision. The requirements of conversion and post-conversion life were not necessarily high, depending on, to a certain extent, the openness of the Judean communities with whom the proselytes were associated.

The unclarity and silence around the requirements and expectations of proselytes might not have been accidental. The limited number of proselytes and the overall lack of enthusiasm for proselytizing did not significantly encourage Judeans to advocate for standardized practices for proselytes, particularly concerning females. Moreover, Judeans had diverse expectations and levels of openness to proselytes. The variations among both proselytes and Judeans thus explain the point made by Cohen that a proselyte accepted in one place was not necessarily acknowledged as such elsewhere.[97] It is evidenced in the more extreme and negative perspectives held by some

96. Eric S. Gruen, 'Diaspora and Homeland', in Howard Wettstein (ed.), *Diaspora and Exiles: Varieties of Jewish Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 18-46; Gruen, *Diaspora*.

97. Shaye J.D. Cohen, 'Crossing the Boundary and Becoming a Jew', *HTR* 82 (1989), pp. 13-33 (14).

Judeans who looked down on proselytes or even rejected them, for reasons that were not necessarily based on actual experiences in encountering them. Imagination and situational factors played a dominant role in the formation of such stereotypes, particularly because one's ethnic background could be conveniently used for criticism which, in actuality, was derived from other reasons for dissatisfaction. Certain perceptions toward proselytes were created out of imagination or situational responses. Thus, certain negative Judean perceptions toward proselytes were as superficial as conversion in some cases.