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The Adiabene narrative in the *Jewish Antiquities* of Josephus

Submission for the degree of

D. Phil. in Oriental Studies

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Trinity Term 2017

Abstract

The story of the conversion to Judaism of the Royal House of Adiabene, a satellite kingdom of Parthia, is contained in Book 20, the final book of Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*. It is an ostensibly strange interlude in an otherwise chronological account of events in Judaea in the first century CE leading up to the Jewish Revolt against Rome. The narrative has often been thought of by scholars as a makeweight, copied from other sources, without much authorial intervention by Josephus.

The thesis shows that the Adiabene narrative is no makeweight, but is crafted by Josephus to link closely to the themes of the *Jewish Antiquities* as a whole and indeed forms a coda to the work. The primary links are in the messages that Judaism is attractive to distinguished non-Jews, that Jews are a respectable people who can display Greco-Roman virtues and that the Jewish God is all-powerful and protects from harm those who worship him in piety. The links to the rest of the *Jewish Antiquities* are reinforced by the similarity of the characterisation of the hero Izates, King of Adiabene, with Josephus's characterisation of biblical heroes, and by a continuity of style of historiography, showing a definite authorial imprint. The thesis also concludes, contrary to most scholarly opinion, that Josephus viewed the hero, Izates, as a Jew before he became circumcised.

The thesis concludes that much of the narrative's historiographical style would have resonated with a non-Jewish Greco-Roman readership, Josephus's probable audience, albeit his treatment of Parthian incest and extensive focus on circumcision would have probably seemed strange. In addition, Josephus's use of a royal Parthian as hero would have been credible, notwithstanding Greco-Roman cultural prejudices.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Martin Goodman for his support, guidance and encouragement over the five years I have been first a Masters and then a Doctoral student at Oxford. It has been a tremendous privilege to have been able to return to higher education after so many years' absence and I am truly grateful to Professor Goodman for taking the risk, in accepting me as a mature student, that my desire to find out more about Jews in the Greco-Roman world might have been just a passing fancy.

I would in addition like to thank others who have also given me valuable advice on various aspects of this thesis throughout my Doctoral studies. Firstly, Professor Rhiannon Ash, who provided many helpful comments and observations on early drafts of the sections of Chapter 4 on Rome and Parthia and literature in Domitianic Rome, as well as an early draft of Chapter 2 submitted as part of my Transfer of Status. Thanks are also due to Professor Alison Salvesen, who provided helpful comments, both together with Professor Ash on Chapter 2, with Dr. Katherine Clarke on an early draft of Chapter 3 submitted for my Confirmation of Status and with Professor Tessa Rajak following my Viva. Many thanks also to colleagues taking part in the Tuesday afternoon Oxford seminars on Jewish History and Literature in the Graeco-Roman Period, who gave valuable comments on a presentation to them of Chapter 6 of the thesis.

My sincere thanks are also due to Dr. Maria Kanellou of UCL, who managed to resuscitate in me a knowledge of Ancient Greek that had lain dormant for 40 years.

Lastly, but by no means least, thank you to my wife Sheila, who has been particularly forbearing in allowing Josephus to lodge with us during my studies. He has proved to be a very intrusive guest!

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Abbreviations

All abbreviations of classical authors and their works are as in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th Edition, 2012, Oxford University Press, Oxford, except for the works of Josephus, which are abbreviated as follows: *Jewish War* - *BJ*, *Jewish Antiquities* - *AJ*, *Life* - *Vita*, *Against Apion* - *C. Ap.* References to Josephus's text without reference to a specific work are to the relevant book and paragraph in the *Jewish Antiquities*.

All abbreviations of books in the Old Testament, New Testament, Deuterocanonical Works and Septuagint and Old Testament Pseudepigrapha are as in *The SBL Handbook of Style*, SBL Press, 2014.

Other abbreviations:

ANRW - Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt

JJS - Journal of Jewish Studies

JQR - Jewish Quarterly Review

JRS - Journal of Roman Studies

JSJ - Journal for the Study of Judaism

JTS - Journal of Theological Studies

LCL - Loeb Classical Library

Chapter 1

Introduction

The story of the conversion of the Royal House of Adiabene is an ostensibly strange interlude in *Jewish Antiquities* Book 20, the final book of Josephus's history of the Jewish people, which otherwise deals broadly chronologically with events in Judaea leading up to the revolt in 66 CE.¹ It tells the tale of how King Monobazus of Adiabene, a small dependent kingdom in the Parthian empire situated in what is now Iraqi Kurdistan, and his sister-wife Queen Helena, produced a son, Izates. Young Izates was persuaded by two Jewish travelling merchants to adopt Jewish customs and to obey the commandments of the Jewish God (as was his mother Helena by another Jew) even to the point, after succeeding his father as King, of circumcision, but in so doing he alienated the nobles of Adiabene.

The narrative continues by telling of Izates's relations with the Parthian ruler Artabanus, by whom he is honoured for supporting him in his conflict with would-be usurpers. Subsequently, Artabanus's son Vardanes threatens him for not joining with him in an attack on Rome but, luckily for Izates, Vardanes is eliminated by his own brother in the nick of time. Izates is then threatened by his rebellious nobles who cannot accept a Jew as a king, and they firstly ally with the local Arab king and then with a Parthian successor king, Vologeses. The Arab king and dissenting nobles are dispatched forthwith and Vologeses is diverted from attacking Izates by news of invading tribes from the northeast of Parthia. Izates then dies aged fifty five, is remembered for his exceptional piety, and the story is

¹ The narrative is contained in *AJ* 20.17-96.

complete. Throughout the narrative, it is clear that Izates's new found God has saved him from his foes, because of his pious embrace of Judaism.

The narrative has attracted some scholarly examination, but only in respect of a limited range of issues. Nearly all modern scholarship has centred upon Izates's transition from non-Jew to Jew and the evidence the narrative provides in respect of Second Temple so-called conversion practices, in particular the role of circumcision for a male.² The narrative is also notable for providing evidence of three of only four known instances of Second Temple Jewish attempts at proselytism of a specific individual, and has therefore been of interest to those scholars investigating whether such activity was widespread in the period.³

There have been two doctoral theses on the Adiabene narrative presented since the mid-twentieth century. The first, submitted by David Barish in 1983, is specifically focussed on an examination of the historical sources for the conversion of the Adiabene royal family, attempting to reconcile the passages in Josephus (and an examination of his possible sources) with both rabbinic anecdotes in the Talmud and archaeology, in Barish's own words 'to distil fact from fiction, history from literary tradition'.⁴ The second, by Michał Marciak, published in 2014, is constructed to combine an analysis of the themes of the Adiabene narrative as biographical literature with an analysis of other sources on Adiabene to present a cultural environment into which the narrative fits.⁵

However, there has been little or no detailed attempt to relate the narrative to any perceived wider purpose of Josephus, let alone an assessment of how it might have been received by

² For a bibliography of scholarship on the conversion episodes, see Chapter 6, p. 159.

³ See e.g. McKnight (1991) pp. 56, 59-60, Feldman (1993) pp. 328-330, Goodman (1994) pp. 84-5, Bird (2012) pp. 97-99. The other example is Fulvia, the Roman matron taught Jewish practices by an unknown Jew (*AJ* 18.81-4).

⁴ Barish (1983) p. 2.

⁵ Marciak (2014).

Josephus's audience. In many instances scholarship has been largely dismissive of this particular element in Josephus's canon. Many scholars, when considering generally his works, treat it (and indeed the whole of Book 20) as a lightweight element, very possibly taken in its entirety from a local source, and used as a makeweight to fill 20 books and thus match, at least ostensibly, the output of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a first century BCE Hellenistic historian who wrote a 20 book history of Rome.⁶ Other than the two doctoral theses mentioned, the most extensive examination of the narrative is contained in an article by Schiffman published in 1987.⁷ However, he too confines his interest to testing the historical veracity of the narrative and its significance for understanding Second Temple conversion practices. Various scholars have mentioned the text within the context of an analysis of Josephus's overall historical purpose, without any consensus.⁸ Wills examines the narrative within the context of what he calls the Jewish Novel, linking this narrative and such works as the *Tobiad Romance* to other novelistic histories in the ancient world such as the *Alexander Romance* and Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, but without drawing conclusions beyond Josephus's desire to entertain his reader.⁹ Perhaps the most extreme view of the narrative was held by the original translator of the Penguin edition of the *Jewish War*, Geoffrey Williamson, who wrote a biography of Josephus. He appears to have been troubled to read about a hero born of incestuous union, believed the conversion 'may have done something to clean up the Augean filth of royal morals in Adiabene' and stated that 'in the last chapter [of the *Antiquities*], we are given another dose of the very unedifying history of Parthia. I can think of no justification for the inclusion [of this passage]'.¹⁰

⁶ See Thackeray (1929) pp. 60-61, 68-70, also Attridge (1984) pp. 213, 216-217.

⁷ Schiffman (1987).

⁸ For example Mason (2003) p. 75 n. 544, (1996) pp. 202, 205-207, (2004) pp. xxxi-ii and Cohen (1987) pp. 424-5.

⁹ Wills (1995) pp. 206-211.

¹⁰ Williamson (1964) pp. 128-129, 289-290.

This comparative lack of interest in the narrative seems curious. At a basic level, Josephus is writing a somewhat strident affirmation of the merits of Judaism in enlisting the help of the all-powerful Jewish God, against a background of a vanquished nation, and a generally held modern-day perception that the Roman world became increasingly anti-Jewish.¹¹ He also focuses on a glorification of circumcision in an environment where many believe that at best Romans mocked such an event but at worst saw it as barbaric.¹² Add to this a Parthian hero, when many scholars believe that Greeks and Romans despised these apparently effete luxury-seeking people,¹³ and it would seem odd that Josephus would stick his head above, so to speak, the Jewish parapet to proclaim the merit of Judaism to non-Jews, as he says elsewhere in the *Antiquities* that he wants to do.¹⁴ Throw in Josephus's claim that, in addition to Vespasian and Titus, he received support from Domitian and his wife Domitia,¹⁵ and it seems rather strange that there has been no study that attempts in detail to reconcile some ostensibly irreconcilable facts.

This thesis therefore attempts to answer three questions. Firstly, what message or messages was Josephus attempting to convey in the Adiabene narrative? Secondly, how did these coincide with or conflict with his messages in the rest of the *Antiquities*? Lastly, how would his audience have reacted to reading (or possibly hearing) the Adiabene narrative? In addition, in the course of the examination, the apparent conundrums mentioned above will be explored to see whether they are real or merely apparent.

The thesis comprises eight chapters of which this chapter, the *Introduction*, is the first.

¹¹ See for example Goodman (2007a) pp. 463-8, Smallwood (1976) pp. 376-385 and Rajak (2002) p. 227. This view is analysed in Chapter 4 pp. 90-103.

¹² For an examination of this, see Chapter 7 pp. 218-222.

¹³ For example, see Isaac (2004) pp. 371-380 and Balsdon (1979) pp. 61-62. For further analysis, see Chapter 4 pp. 110-121.

¹⁴ See Chapter 3 pp. 38-40, Chapter 4 pp. 71-82.

¹⁵ *Vita* 429.

Chapter 2. Outline of the Adiabene narrative examines the structure and subject matter of the Adiabene narrative, splitting it into five principal sections according to theme, and compares this taxonomy with Josephus's own, apparent from so-called textual markers. The genre of the narrative is examined, as is Josephus's use of dramatic tension. A few tentative remarks are offered on Josephus's sources, followed by an examination of the apparently dischronological ordering of the narrative between *AJ* 20.22 and 20.38. Illogicalities and inconsistencies in the text are also examined, and a chapter summary is presented.

Chapter 3. The literary context of the Adiabene narrative. The nature, purpose and messages of the Jewish Antiquities surveys the *Antiquities* in order to place the Adiabene narrative within an overall framework and context. It examines the structure of the *Antiquities* and then seeks to discover Josephus's purposes in writing the work and the choice of subject matter and methods of presentation that Josephus uses to further those purposes. It also examines Josephus's treatment of the topics of proselytism and circumcision, two key aspects of the Adiabene narrative, within the wider context of the *Antiquities* as a whole.

Chapter 4. The historiographical and historical context of the Adiabene narrative looks at the Roman background to the publication of the *Jewish Antiquities* in 94 CE, to aid a later examination of the Adiabene narrative's likely reception, focusing on five principal themes. Firstly, in *Josephus, historiographical tradition and audience*, it examines the historiographical background against which the *Antiquities* was published, Josephus's historiographical tradition and genre and therefore ostensible target audience. The next theme, *Who might have read the Adiabene narrative?*, examines whether we can identify who might have received the *Antiquities* from Josephus. The third theme, *Jews and the*

Flavian Emperors, examines the evidence for whether there was persecution of Jews under Domitian and what the prevailing attitude of Roman society would have been towards Jews in the last decades of the first century CE. The fourth, *Freedom of literary expression under Domitian*, analyses the evidence for believing that to write and publish views that might not have coincided with Domitian's own was a dangerous occupation. The last, *Parthia in the eyes of Rome*, analyses the evidence for Roman attitudes to Parthia and Parthians in the second half of the first century CE as a basis for an evaluation of Roman reaction to reading about a Parthian hero.

Chapter 5. The Adiabene narrative within the context of the Jewish Antiquities builds on the earlier chapters, particularly Chapters 2 and 3, and shows how the Adiabene narrative coincides with Josephus's purposes and messages of the *Antiquities* as a whole, identifying both similarities and dissimilarities. It looks first at the figure of Izates as hero and Izates's relationship with the Jewish God, compared with Josephus's portraits of other Jewish heroes, noting Josephus's selective use of history to enhance his hero's qualities. It then compares other key aspects of the narrative with similar themes elsewhere in the *Antiquities*. The chapter then identifies some striking dissimilarities between the narrative and the remainder of the *Antiquities* and offers some explanations for these. It also examines the nature and role of God in the narrative, comparing this with Josephus's theology elsewhere and lastly provides a conclusion.

Chapter 6. Conversion in the Adiabene narrative examines in detail the critical element of the narrative that deals with the process whereby Izates, Helena and Izates's brother Monobazus became Jews. It takes each stage in the narrative and examines what Josephus is saying, both in terms of the meaning of the Greek text, which is often ambiguous, but also for logic and internal consistency within different parts of the narrative. Because the

narrative has assumed importance for scholars tracing the development of conversion to Judaism as a concept, it reviews scholarly attempts over the past fifty years to explain the narrative in terms of a logical whole, and in particular examines the consensus view that Izates was not considered by Josephus to be a Jew until he had been circumcised.

Chapter 7. The Adiabene narrative in Domitianic Rome uses the conclusions in Chapter 4 as to genre and audience as background in analysing the text and its constituent elements to determine that audience's likely reaction to the Adiabene narrative. In particular, it seeks to answer the question as to how effective the narrative would have been in furthering the aims and objectives of the *Antiquities* as a whole.

Chapter 8. Summary and Conclusions. The purpose of the Adiabene narrative summarises the conclusions from each chapter and offers some concluding remarks.

Chapter 2

Outline of the Adiabene narrative

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of Josephus's Adiabene narrative, focusing on the text as a self-contained unit rather than, at this stage in the thesis, its place as part of the *Jewish Antiquities*. The chapter begins by presenting a summary of the narrative, dividing this into a sectional framework suggested by the ordering of the subject matter by Josephus. This framework is then compared with a framework derived from so-called 'markers', textual phrases which seem to be used by Josephus to indicate breaks of subject matter in his narrative. The question of genre is then addressed, together with Josephus's use of dramatic tension. An examination of possible sources is made, together with an analysis of the early part of the narrative to determine any possible reasons for the apparent lack of chronological structure. Other anomalies within the text are analysed and a view is presented on when in the first century CE the main elements of the narrative may have taken place. The chapter concludes with a summary and pointers to where in the thesis particular issues or themes are further addressed.

2.2. Structure of the narrative

Josephus's narrative concerning the conversion of the royal family of Adiabene, vassal kingdom of Parthia, in the first century CE, and its subsequent deliverance from its enemies is contained within Book 20, chapters 17-96, of Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*. It comprises some 3,000 words and occupies approximately thirty percent of that book. The principal character is Izates, Prince and later King of Adiabene. Other important Adiabenean

characters are Monobazus I, Izates's father and predecessor king, Helena, Izates's mother, Monobazus I's sister and queen and subsequently dowager queen, and Monobazus II, Izates's brother and successor. Important foreigners are Artabanus, King of Parthia, Vardanes, his son and successor and Vologeses, Vardanes's brother and successor. Brief but important roles are also played by Abias, King of the Arabs, Ananias, a Jew and merchant in the Babylonian and Assyrian territories, and Eleazar, a Jew from Galilee.

The narrative ostensibly presents itself by subject matter into ten distinct topics within 5 sections.

Section 1 (20.17) - Introduction

Section 2 (20.18-33) - Portrait of the young Izates

Section 2a (20.18-23) - Izates's youth

Section 2b (20.24-33) - Izates's succession

Section 3 (20.34-53) - Judaism and the Royal Family

Section 3a (20.34-37) - Izates's and Helena's Jewish experiences

Section 3b (20.38-48) - The circumcision narrative

Section 3c (20.49-53) - The good deeds of Helena and Izates

Section 4 (20.54-91) - Adiabene and foreigners

Section 4a (20.54-68) - Izates and Artabanus

Section 4b (20.69-74) - Izates and Vardanes's hostility

Section 4c (20.75-91) - Monobazus's conversion, Abias's and Vologeses's hostility

Section 5 (20.92-96) - The death of Izates and Helena

Each of these is now examined in turn.

2.3. Sectional precis¹⁶

Section 1 (20.17). Josephus prefaces this part of his narrative with a short but informative sentence. Helena and her son Izates ‘became converts to Judaism (εἰς τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθη τὸν βίον μετέβαλον) in the following circumstances (διὰ τοιαύτην αἰτίαν)’.¹⁷

¹⁶ All translations of the narrative in quotations are from Feldman LCL 456 unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁷ A classic Josephan introduction. See below for analysis of Josephan textual markers.

Section 2a (20.18-23). Monobazus I takes his sister Helena in marriage and she becomes pregnant. While they are sleeping, he hears a voice telling him to remove his hand from her belly, so as not to hurt the child, which would have a blessed life. King Monobazus shows favouritism to Izates over his elder full-brother Monobazus and their half-brothers. The half-brothers grow envious, which Monobazus forgives, but removes Izates for his own safety to be a ward of the King of Charax Spasini.¹⁸ Izates makes a favourable impression there and is given the king's daughter in marriage.

Section 2b (20.24–33). Monobazus, now old, summons Izates from Charax Spasini and gives him the governorship of Charon province (the site apparently of Noah's ark) to which he repairs until his father's death. Upon that event, Helena announces that King Monobazus has appointed Izates to succeed him in preference to Izates's elder full-brother and their half-brothers. She however puts this to the nobles, who back the Royal preference. Rejecting their advice to kill Izates's half-brothers, Helena puts them in chains and appoints Izates's full-brother Monobazus as regent. He makes way for Izates upon the latter's arrival to claim his kingdom.

Section 3a (20.34–37). The narrative then switches back to an earlier time at Charax Spasini (presumably sometime around or after paragraphs 20.22-23, Section 2a above), where Ananias, a Jewish merchant, has influenced the King's wives and 'taught them to worship God after the manner of the Jewish religion (ἐδίδασκεν αὐτὰς τὸν θεὸν σέβειν, ὡς Ἰουδαίοις πάτρον ἦν)' and, through the women, Ananias 'likewise persuaded' Izates.

Later, during Izates's trip to see his dying father (paragraphs 20.24-26, Section 2b above) it becomes clear that 'Helena likewise had been instructed by another Jew and had been brought over to their laws (συνεβεβήκει δὲ καὶ τὴν Ἑλένην ὁμοίως ὑφ' ἑτέρου τινὸς

¹⁸ A major trading post on the Arabian Gulf.

Ἰουδαίου διδαχθεῖσαν εἰς τοὺς εἰκείνων μετακεκομίσθαι νόμους). The narrative then jumps forward to where it left off (paragraph 20.33, Section 2b above), namely Izates claims his kingdom, is distressed to see his half-brothers in chains and sends them to the emperor Claudius in Rome and Artabanus, the Parthian monarch, as hostages.

Section 3b (20.38–48). Izates, since he sees that his mother was ‘very much pleased with the Jewish religion (πάνυ τοῖς Ἰουδαίων ἔθεσιν χαίρειν)’, then ‘was zealous to convert to it himself (ἔσπευσε καὶ αὐτὸς εἰς ἐκεῖνα μεταθέσθαι)’, but thinks he will not be ‘genuinely a Jew (βεβαίως Ἰουδαῖος)’ unless he is circumcised. He is however dissuaded from doing so both by his mother and Ananias, who are afraid that he will incur the displeasure of his subjects and produce much disaffection as an adherent of strange, foreign and unseemly practices and he is persuaded that he could ‘worship God (τὸ θεῖον σέβειν)’ without circumcision ‘if he had indeed fully decided to be a devoted adherent of Judaism, for it was this that counted more than circumcision (εἶγε πάντως κέκρικε ζηλοῦν τὰ πάτρια τῶν Ἰουδαίων τοῦτ’ εἶναι κυριώτερον τοῦ περιτέμνεσθαι)’.

However, later, another Jew comes from Galilee, ‘having a reputation for being extremely strict when it came to the ancestral laws’, and finds Izates reading the Law of Moses. He urges him to carry out the rite, claiming that not to be circumcised is the greatest offence against God, an impiety (ἁσέβεια) and in direct contravention of the Laws he has been reading. Izates is persuaded and has the deed done by the court physician immediately, whereupon Helena and Ananias, somewhat melodramatically, are seized with ‘fear beyond measure’ about his subjects’ likely reaction to a king who was ‘a devotee of foreign practices’.¹⁹ The passage concludes by Josephus telling his reader however that God

¹⁹ A detailed analysis of the ‘conversion’ aspect of the narrative is given in Chapter 6.

prevented such fears from being realised and guarded Izates and his children from danger, thus demonstrating the reward of piety.

Section 3c (20.49–53). Helena sees that all is at peace in the kingdom and that Izates is the object of admiration by all. She travels, with Izates's blessing, to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple and uses her considerable wealth to support the city in a time of famine, by importing foodstuffs from Egypt and Cyprus, thus leaving a favourable impression with Jerusalemites. Izates similarly donates money. Josephus mentions other good deeds performed by the pair, but does not elaborate.

Section 4a (20.54–68). Artabanus, King of Parthia, discovers a plot against him by his nobles and goes to seek Izates's support. Izates, upon learning of Artabanus's plight, not only accords him honours and makes him welcome in Adiabene but intercedes, by pledging his own honour, with Parthia in support of Artabanus and persuades the usurper Cinnamus to hand back the throne. Artabanus rewards Izates with privileges (permission to wear his tiara upright and sleep on a bed of gold) and the territory surrounding Nisibis.

Section 4b (20.69–74). Artabanus dies and Izates attempts to dissuade his son, Vardanes, from making war on the Romans, 'constantly describing the resources and achievements of the Romans', not only because Izates 'knowing well the might and fortune of the Romans, thought that Vardanes was attempting the impossible' but also because he had apparently sent five sons to Jerusalem, to be with their grandmother Helena and to acquire a thorough knowledge of the native language and culture.²⁰ Vardanes is irritated by Izates and declares war on him. However, according to Josephus, 'God cut short all his expectations' and Vardanes is replaced by his brother Cotardes.

²⁰ Who presumably might become hostages in the event of hostilities between Parthia and Rome.

Section 4c (20.75–92). Izates’s brother Monobazus notices, so Josephus says, that Izates’s pious worship had won the admiration from all men and, with his family, becomes eager ‘to abandon their ancestral religion and to adopt the practices of the Jews’. Unfortunately, the nobles become secretly angry at this and connive with Abias, king of the Arabs, to hand over the kingdom to him, by persuading Abias that, were he to attack Adiabene, they would flee at a strategic moment. The ruse does not work and Izates, aided by God, does not panic but regroups and defeats Abias, killing him.

Undeterred, the nobles engage with Vologeses, King of Parthia, inviting him to intervene and appoint another overlord for them. The armies prepare for war.²¹ Izates decides to commit himself to God the protector (τῷ κηδεμόνι θεῷ), believing that in God he had the ‘greatest of allies’. He then receives a messenger who informs him that ‘even the God he worshipped would not be able to deliver him’. Izates consequently prepares himself for the fight. He abases himself, fasts with his wife and children, and seeks God’s help, not only for himself and his family but because others have challenged God’s power. God hears him and miraculously, that very night, Vologeses retreats, having been attacked by Scythian tribes to the northeast. Josephus concludes this section with ‘Thus by the providence of God (κατὰ θεοῦ πρόνοιαν), Izates escaped the threats of the Parthians’.

Section 5 (20.92 – 96). Izates dies aged 55, having reigned for 24 years, leaving 24 sons and 24 daughters and the throne to his faithful brother Monobazus. Helena returns home from Jerusalem but dies soon thereafter of a broken heart. Monobazus sends Izates’s and Helena’s bones to be buried in three pyramids just outside Jerusalem. Josephus promises to narrate the deeds of Monobazus later.²²

²¹ Although all Izates’s nobles were against him (20.76), he somewhat fortuitously is accompanied by 6,000 horsemen (20.86), albeit Josephus gives us no clue as to their provenance.

²² But does not fulfil his promise.

2.4. Josephus's narrative markers

The ordering above of the subject matter has been constructed by topic or subject matter, as apparent to the modern reader. It is worthwhile comparing this taxonomy with any that may be apparent from the words used by Josephus to indicate sections of subject matter (Josephus 'markers'), in order to determine if Josephus may have had an agenda or agendas not immediately apparent.

The 'markers' come in essentially 4 types.²³

1. Temporal markers (initial sectional statements) – Κατὰ τοῦτον δὲ τὸν καιρὸν (17), Καθ'ὃν δὲ χρόνον (34), Μετ'οὐ πολὺν δε χρόνον (69), Καὶ τοῦτον δὲ μετ'οὐ πολὺν χρόνον (74), Μετ' οὐ πολὺν δὲ χρόνον (92). Also διὰ τοιαύτην αἰτίαν (17), as a means of introducing a new narrative.
2. Change of subject, use of δὲ and present participle as subordinate clause (initial sectional statements) – Μονόβαζος τῆς ἀδελφῆς Ἑλένης ἀλοὺς ἔρωτι (18), Μονόβαζος δὲ ἤδη γηραιὸς ὢν (24), Ἑλένη δὲ ἡ τοῦ βασιλέως μήτηρ ὀρφανή (49), ὁ δὲ τῶν Πάρθων βασιλεὺς Ἀρταβάνης αἰσθόμενος (54), Ὁ δὲ τοῦ βασιλέως ἀδελφὸς Μονόβαζος καὶ οἱ συγγενεῖς θεωροῦντες (75), Ἀποτυχόντες δὲ οἱ τῶν Ἀδιαβηνῶν μεγιστᾶνες (81).
3. Josephus reference to later elaboration of the topic (closing sectional statements) (often unfulfilled) - ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ὕστερον ἀπαγγελοῦμεν (48), ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἃ τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν εἰς τὴν πόλιν ἡμῶν ἀγαθὰ πέπρακται μετὰ ταῦτα δηλώσομεν (53), ἀλλὰ Μονόβαζος μὲν ὁ βασιλεὺς ὅσα κατὰ τὸν τῆς ζωῆς χρόνον ἔπραξεν, ὕστερον ἀπαγγελοῦμεν (96).

²³ Barish (1983) pp. 79-80 n. 38 gives a useful summary of these types, with examples from elsewhere in the *Antiquities*. See also Cohen (1979) pp. 71-72 n. 8 and Schwartz (1982) pp. 246-254 for a discussion of Josephus's use of language in this way.

4. Summary statement (closing sectional statement) – Ταύταις μὲν δὴ ταῖς τιμαῖς ὁ Ἰζάτης ὑπὸ τοῦ τῶν Πάρθων βασιλέως ἐτιμήθη (68).

These are illustrated in tabular form below.

Table 1

Ostensible Structure		Josephan Markers				
Sec.	Para.	Sec.	Para.	Place	Marker	Type
1	17	1	17	Beginning	Κατὰ τοῦτον δὲ τὸν καιρὸν. διὰ τοιαύτην αἰτίαν	1
2a	18-23	2	18	Beginning	Μονόβαζος τῆς ἀδελφῆς Ἑλένης ἀλοῦς ἔρωτι	2
2b	24-33	3	24	Beginning	Μονόβαζος δὲ ἤδη γηραιὸς ὢν	2
3a	34-37	4	34	Beginning	Καθ'ὃν δὲ χρόνον	1
3b	38-48		48	End	ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ὕστερον ἀπαγγελοῦμεν	3
3c	49-53	5	49	Beginning	Ἑλένη δὲ ἡ τοῦ βασιλέως μήτηρ ὀρώσα	2
			53	End	ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἃ τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν εἰς τὴν πόλιν ἡμῶν ἀγαθὰ πέπρακται μετὰ ταῦτα δηλώσομεν	3
4a	54-68	6	54	Beginning	ὁ δὲ τῶν Πάρθων βασιλεὺς Ἀρταβάνης αἰσθόμενος	2
			68	End	Ταύταις μὲν δὴ ταῖς τιμαῖς ὁ Ἰζάτης ὑπὸ τοῦ τῶν Πάρθων βασιλέως ἐτιμήθη	4
4b	69-74	7	69	Beginning	Μετ'οὐ πολὺν δε χρόνον	1
		8	74	Beginning	Καὶ τοῦτον δὲ μετ'οὐ πολὺν χρόνον	1
4c	75-91	9	75	Beginning	Ὁ δὲ τοῦ βασιλέως ἀδελφὸς Μονόβαζος καὶ οἱ συγγενεῖς θεωροῦντες	2
		10	81	Beginning	Ἀποτυχόντες δὲ οἱ τῶν Ἀδιαβηνῶν μεγιστᾶνες	2
5	92-96	11	92	Beginning	Μετ' οὐ πολὺν δὲ χρόνον	1
			96	End	ἀλλὰ Μονόβαζος μὲν ὁ βασιλεὺς ὅσα κατὰ τὸν τῆς ζωῆς χρόνον ἐπραξεν, ὕστερον ἀπαγγελοῦμεν	3

It can be seen from the table above that the Josephan markers in general match well with the ostensible rhythm of the narrative. There is one potentially significant difference, namely that Section 3b (20.38-48, the ‘circumcision episode’) is the only section of the narrative not to have a ‘marker’ at the beginning, and the Josephan markers start at paragraph 20.34 and end at paragraph 20.48. The possible reason for this is explored below under ‘The order of the narrative’. There are also two minor differences. Firstly, Josephus appears to give paragraph 20.74 (the death of Cotardes and the succession of Vologeses) particular prominence by separating it from the previous section (20.69-73) dealing with the machinations of Vardanes against Izates and his consequent divinely ordained death.

The most likely reason for this would appear to be to emphasise the element of divine retribution in 20.72 (τοῦ θεοῦ τὰς ἐλπίδας αὐτοῦ πάσας ὑποτεμόντος), by terminating the following paragraph (20.73, Vardanes's downfall) as a proof text, and let the historical narrative continue (20.74) as a coda. Similarly, presumably again to emphasise God's power, there is a marker at the beginning of paragraph 20.81 (having failed with Abias, the Adiabenean nobles turn to Vardanes) linking back to the illustration of God's power shown in the previous section ending paragraph 20.80 (Abias's demise). In this latter case the reference to God's power occurs after the break, but looks backwards (Ἀποτυχόντες δὲ οἱ τῶν Ἀδιαβηνῶν μεγιστᾶνες τῆς πρώτης ἐπιχειρήσεως παραδόντος αὐτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τῷ βασιλεῖ ουδ' ὥς ἡρέμουν).

2.5. Genre

The genre and form of the Adiabenean episode conform to no single type of literature. At one level, Josephus clearly means his readers to view the narrative as history, in line with the rest of the *Antiquities*.²⁴ However, it is obvious to even the most casual of readers that it is more than simple historical narrative, displaying, at different points of the story, the form of biography, historical (folklore) novel or romance and biblical allegory.

Some ancient biographers claimed that biographies (*βίοι*) were different from histories,²⁵ preferring to omit the grand sweep of history to focus on the particular, leaving, as Plutarch

²⁴ See Chapter 4 pp. 71-82 for a further analysis of the genre of the *Antiquities*.

²⁵ See for example Nepos *Pelopidas* 1 'for I fear that if I undertake to tell of his deeds, I shall seem to be writing a history rather than a biography' (trans. Rolfe LCL 467) and Plut. *Vit. Alex.* 'For it is not Histories that I am writing, but Lives' (trans. Perrin LCL 99). However the distinction was often somewhat blurred in practice; see for example, (as remarked upon by Momigliano (1993) p. 116) Cicero's letter to Lucceius, who was about to embark upon a history (*Fam.* 5,12.5): 'The actual chronological record of events exercises no very powerful fascination upon us; it is like the recital of an almanac. But in the doubtful and various fortunes of an outstanding individual we often find surprise and suspense, joy and distress, hope and fear (trans. Shackleton-Bailey LCL 205).

puts it, ‘to others the description of their great contests’,²⁶ albeit there are many examples of biographies contained within ostensible historical narratives. It is also clear from the works of the three principal ancient biographers (whose works have survived to any great extent) who preceded Josephus or were broadly contemporaneous with him, namely, Nepos, Plutarch and Suetonius,²⁷ that the recording of the lives of famous men generally followed certain patterns. Nepos, writing in the first century BCE, enumerates them as follows:

I shall speak first of his family, then of the subjects which he studied and his teachers, next of his character, his natural qualities, and anything else that is worthy of record. Finally, I shall give an account of his exploits, which many writers consider more important than mental excellence.²⁸

The principal concern of the ancient biographers was the detailing of character. Polybius, writing in the second century BCE, is concerned to sketch the ‘training and character’ of an individual²⁹ or as Plutarch puts it, ‘the signs of the soul in men’.³⁰ However, the use to which such character sketches were put varies between biographers. Suetonius, for example, in his *Lives of the Caesars*, records qualities and defects of the Caesars from Augustus to Domitian to measure, in the words of Wallace-Hadrill, ‘each Caesar against a set scale of criteria. Each virtue/vice category applies as it were as a litmus test’.³¹ Plutarch, by contrast, is concerned with morality, to expose, as he puts it, ‘a manifestation of virtue or vice’.³²

²⁶ Plut. *Vit. Alex.* 1.

²⁷ Together with Tacitus, also a contemporary of Josephus, whose *Agricola* records the life of his father-in-law and who claims (*Agr.* 1) that ‘to hand down to posterity the works and ways of famous men was a custom of the past: our age has not yet abandoned it even now’ (trans. Peterson LCL 35). Also not forgetting Josephus’s own *Vita*.

²⁸ *Epam.* 1.4, trans. Rolfe LCL 467.

²⁹ Polyb. 10.21.

³⁰ Plut. *Vit. Alex.* 1.

³¹ Wallace-Hadrill (1995) p. 144.

³² Plut. *Vit. Alex.* 1.

Josephus tells his readers, at the very beginning of the narrative (20.17) that the passage is about the conversion of Helena and Izates, which at first glance appears more ‘historical’ than ‘biographical’, in that it does not claim to write about the ‘lives’ of either, but rather a single facet of their life, namely their ‘conversion’. However, as Marciak points out,³³ he then proceeds to set out biographical details of Izates in a format that appears to conform to the ancient notion of biography. He begins by giving us Izates’s lineage,³⁴ and provides, as Marciak puts it, a detailed description of Izates’s upbringing, from infant (βρέφος-20.18) to boy (παῖς-20.21) to young man (νεανίας-20.22) to his father’s successor.³⁵

However, his treatment of Izates’s life thereafter, and of Izates’s characteristics, character and deeds, follow a singular course. Josephus too is interested, like Plutarch, in morality, and we learn of several of Izates’s moral characteristics, more by inference than by direct reference, such as his charity, prudence, bravery, faithfulness and humility.³⁶ However, these are all positive, rendering the portrait somewhat two dimensional and, in addition, we also learn nothing about Izates’s physical attributes (a common feature of ancient biographies).³⁷ In addition, the description of the course of his life is somewhat selective, revealing to the reader only those incidents relevant to Izates’s relationship with God, albeit the narrative ends in typical ‘bookending’ biographical mode, with Izates’s death. Josephus’s biography therefore differs from other known ancient biographies, in that the characterisation lends itself to a wider purpose, external in a sense to the biography itself. Ultimately, Josephus is much less interested in the man than he is in the idea of *pronoia*, God’s bounty, in exchange for piety. Similarly, any biographical details of Helena (her

³³ Marciak (2014) pp. 28-29.

³⁴ Lineage being of particular interest to aristocratic Romans; see Momigliano (1993) p. 95.

³⁵ Another characteristic of ancient biography, since the fourth century BCE, was the importance placed on a person’s formative years (Momigliano (1993) p. 55).

³⁶ For an examination of Josephus’s technique in this respect, see Chapter 5.

³⁷ For a possible reason for this omission, see Chapter 7 p. 194.

interregnum management of the kingdom (20.26-32), her concern at Izates's circumcision (20.47) and her good deeds for the citizens of Jerusalem (20.49-53)) are incidental to the main plot and message.

The style of the narrative is clearly designed to excite curiosity about the exotic,³⁸ in that the setting is Parthia, and the opening dream sequence invites comparisons with fable. The folklore element is also clear in contrasting the two faithful brothers Monobazus and Cinnamus with the storybook treachery of the wicked nobles of both Adiabene and Parthia. There are other direct parallels with Jewish folklore 'novels' of the ancient world, particularly the biblical Book of Judith. Judith's role as the saviour of her people and her strict adherence to the Law, together with the conversion of the righteous Gentile Achior, have similarities with the Adiabene story, with Helena as saviour of Jerusalem at a time of famine and Izates both as righteous convert and as agent of God's will. The message is simple: God protects the godly, and to be truly observantly Jewish is to be godly, a message that can also be seen in the OT Book of Daniel and the Apocryphal books Susanna and Bel and the Dragon. However, it is in the Adiabene narrative that the message is most overt, and Josephus repeats the point eight times in the story.³⁹

2.6. Dramatic tension

Throughout the narrative, Josephus does not hesitate to use dramatic tension, both to bring the reader into the story and also to introduce a climax to a section of the narrative. He does this in a variety of ways, firstly by using direct speech, albeit sparingly, to break up the narrative. In particular, Josephus uses direct speech on four critical occasions to heighten

³⁸ See Chapter 7 pp. 191-3 for an analysis of audience reaction to this.

³⁹ *AJ* 20.18, 48, 49, 72, 75, 81, 85, 91. For further analysis, see Chapter 5 pp. 129-132.

dramatic emphasis, namely Helena's speech to the nobles requesting their approval of Izates as king (20.27), Eleazar's admonishment of Izates for failing to be circumcised (20.44-45), the exchange between Artabanus and Izates upon meeting (20.56-59), and Izates's prayer to God (20.90).

Additionally, the device in the Adiabene story, when relating the conversion narrative, of moving forwards and backwards in time, creates suspense and heightens the dramatic tension, challenging the reader to concentrate more than would be the case with a chronological approach. This tension is then linked to the thrust of the didactic element, namely the triumph of God's will, Josephus using an ostensible historiographical framework around his biography of Izates to convince the reader of the veracity of this message.

Josephus also uses dramatic imagery to good effect. Almost immediately upon the commencement of the narrative, Josephus introduces the twin topics of incest, using the arresting phrase 'seized with passion (ἀλὸς ἔρωτι)' ⁴⁰ and supernatural intervention in sleep to direct the reader's attention to the first of the narrative's messages, namely that Izates will live a life of good fortune (20.17-18).⁴¹ He follows this with a passage (20.20-23) concerning the hatred of Izates's brothers, painting a picture of danger, 'as he was greatly alarmed for him, lest the hatred of his brothers should bring him to some harm (σφόδρα γὰρ ἐδεδοίκει περὶ αὐτοῦ, μὴ μισούμενος ὑπὸ τῶν ἀδελφῶν πάθοι τι)', before providing escape for Izates through his shelter by Abennerigus, king of Charax.

⁴⁰ In fact, we know from para 20.20 that Izates had an elder brother, Monobazus II, and therefore passion and marriage had in fact occurred earlier. Josephus is thus artificially connecting passion, marriage and Izates's birth, to heighten the dramatic tension.

⁴¹ The possible effect of these topics on the likely reader is discussed in Chapter 7.

The conversion episode has also been constructed with the aid of dramatic tension. From the passage recounting Helena's and Ananias's fear over Izates's intended circumcision (20.39-41), we learn that not only would Izates's subjects not tolerate this, but that Helena held him back by every other means (παντοίως ἐκώλυεν) and that Ananias would be forced to flee if Izates had the deed carried out. Once Izates had been persuaded by Eleazar, we learn that Helena and Ananias were seized with fear beyond measure (φόβος οὔτι μέτριος) (20.47). However, again salvation occurs at the climax to the passage, namely God's care for those who are pious (20.48).

In addition, as a mechanism to show both Artabanus's stature and Izates's humility, a patently artificial scene is constructed by Josephus, using both direct speech and pathos in the dialogue between the two. Somewhat improbably, Izates and Artabanus meet by chance along the road and Izates is at first unaware of Artabanus's identity, notwithstanding that he was accompanied by 1,000 men.⁴² The circumstances therefore allow Josephus to paint a scene of mutual humility as each attempts to accord the other precedence in title.⁴³ Although Artabanus is brought low, he articulates the view that 'changes in fortune are the lot of all men' (20.61), a concept that is further examined in Chapter 7 (pp. 213-5). The fact then that Izates is honoured by such a man lends stature to the hero of the narrative. Lastly, the denouement of the narrative, Izates's encounter with Vologeses, is dramatized firstly by the threateningly arrogant nature of Vologeses's messenger, but also by the reporting in direct speech of Izates's prayer to God.⁴⁴

⁴² An apparently stock phrase; see Tac. *Ann.* 13.38, 1,000 being the number of Tiridates's proposed guard while meeting Corbulo.

⁴³ Izates jumps down from his horse (20.58) in deference, apparently a common gesture of respect (see e.g. Tac. *Ann.* 15.28, where the Roman general Corbulo and Vologeses, King of Parthia, mutually dismount).

⁴⁴ Josephus's use of prayer to God is examined in Chapter 5 pp. 145-7.

2.7. Sources

Relatively few scholars have commented specifically on the sources that Josephus may have used in creating the Adiabene narrative, most confining themselves to a general comparison of *AJ* 18-20 with the *Jewish War*.⁴⁵ Those writing before 1983 have been well summarised by Barish,⁴⁶ and most conclude that Josephus received the text from either a single source or two sources, with relatively little alteration. The hypotheses regarding the identity of the source or sources vary from a so-called Universal History or Herodian History, a Roman chronicle that contained Parthian information, an original Parthian source document (or possibly two) to the chronicles of a travelling Jewish missionary.

The problem with all of these theories is that they are without any real supporting evidence. Some commentators, notably Schalit, see there to be a close source connection between the Adiabene narrative and the story of Asinaeus and Anilaeus.⁴⁷ The connection in terms of subject matter is examined later in this thesis,⁴⁸ but Schalit's arguments for a single royal propagandist Aramaic source for both rest on an unsupported assumption of royal provenance and a view that Aramaic language can be found in both (a view subsequently doubted by other scholars).⁴⁹ Schiffman⁵⁰ cites with approval Schalit's conclusions, believes that there was a single source and that Josephus did little if anything to modify it, convinced by Josephus's frequent references in the text to projects apparently not fulfilled.⁵¹

⁴⁵ See for example Cohen (1979) pp. 24-83.

⁴⁶ Barish (1983) pp. 13-22.

⁴⁷ Schalit (1965) pp. 171-176.

⁴⁸ Chapter 5 pp. 143-4.

⁴⁹ For an analysis of Schalit's article and others' reactions to his findings of an Aramaic source, see Marciak (2014) pp. 118-120.

⁵⁰ Schiffman (1987) p. 294.

⁵¹ Albeit, as Rajak (1998) pp. 321-2, citing Petersen (1958), points out, Josephus's unfulfilled promise of further information is rife throughout the *Antiquities*. Rajak suggests the origin as a popular royal biography from Adiabene.

Barish⁵² ascribes the narrative to essentially two sources, a political one (20.17-20.33, 20.54-20.96) and a religious one (20.34-20.53), with speculation as to whether 20.69-20.74, (Succession of the Parthian Kings) comes from a third source and whether 20.49-20.53 (Helena's visit to Jerusalem) comes from an oral source. Barish does not opine on where these might have originated, but is convinced, in my view correctly, that whatever sources there were at Josephus's disposal were heavily edited by Josephus himself,⁵³ both by the evidence of Josephan markers, discussed above, and because of the linking of what is ostensibly a political history/biography to the larger Josephan themes of God's providence.⁵⁴ Marciak too believes that there are inherently two sources, political and religious, but offers no opinion on what those might be and, like Barish, finds significant evidence of Josephus's own authorial imprint.⁵⁵

Whatever written sources there may have been, it seems that less prominence has been given by scholars than should have been to the possibility of oral testimony.⁵⁶ It is clear that Josephus would not have been unfamiliar with royalty and high-ranking nobility from Adiabene. Born in 37 CE⁵⁷ and brought up in Jerusalem to a family descended on his mother's side from Hasmonaeans,⁵⁸ it is likely that he would have encountered, through his family, the Adiabenians who had presumably begun to settle there after Helena's arrival in 46/47 CE (20.49-53) and her sojourn there.⁵⁹ It is entirely possible that the excursus

⁵² Barish (1983) p. 31.

⁵³ Ibid p. 66.

⁵⁴ The issues of the relationship of the narrative to the wider themes of the *Antiquities* are discussed in Chapter 5.

⁵⁵ Marciak (2014) pp. 121-122.

⁵⁶ Neusner (1964) p. 60, Barish (1983) p. 31, Rajak (1998) p. 322 and Marciak (2014) p. 121 all allow that oral testimony could have been used, without exploring the possibility further.

⁵⁷ *AJ* 20.267.

⁵⁸ *Vita* 1-6, 7-9.

⁵⁹ *AJ* 20.49. For dating see Feldman LCL 456 p. 27 note a.

relating to Helena's visit was based on oral testimony and her efforts to alleviate the famine there may well have been witnessed by Josephus himself.

The Adiabeniensians appear to have continued to have lived there after Helena's departure and death⁶⁰ up to the time of the Revolt in 66 CE, and Josephus refers to a palace built by Grapte, a kinswoman of Izates,⁶¹ to the courtyard of Monobazus,⁶² and to the palace of Helena in the middle of the Acra,⁶³ possibly different palaces, most probably in the same area, south of the Temple Mount. Such residences would no doubt have required a considerable entourage, leading to a sizeable community, some of whom fought in the Revolt.⁶⁴

In addition, according to Cassius Dio, Monobazus gave the Roman general Corbulo hostages upon the agreement of a truce between Parthia and Rome in 63/64 CE,⁶⁵ and these were presumably the same 'sons of Monobazus' who accompanied Tiridates to Rome, arriving with much ceremony in 66 CE.⁶⁶ Their number would have been increased by Adiabeniensian hostages sent by Titus to Rome after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE.⁶⁷ In any event, therefore, regardless of his encounters with Adiabeniensians before the revolt, he would have had ample opportunity upon his arrival in Rome in 71 CE⁶⁸ to meet both Adiabeniensian hostages sent by Titus and those who might have remained from 66 CE.

⁶⁰ 56-60 CE (*AJ* 20.94). See later in this chapter (pp. 31-2) for dating of the narrative.

⁶¹ *BJ* 4.567.

⁶² *BJ* 5.252.

⁶³ *BJ* 5.253, 6.355. Her tomb, Izates's and probably Monobazus's were outside Jerusalem (*AJ* 20.95, *BJ* 5.55, 5.119, 5.147, Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* 2.12, Paus. 8.16.5).

⁶⁴ *BJ* 2.520, 5.474, 6.356.

⁶⁵ Cass. Dio 62.23.4.

⁶⁶ Cass. Dio 63.1.2.

⁶⁷ *BJ* 6.356-7.

⁶⁸ *BJ* 7.119, *Vita* 422-3, Cass. Dio 65.12.1a.

2.8. The order of the narrative and further source issues

It is clear from the above that, for the most part, the narrative is essentially chronological, progressing through from Izates's birth to his death. However, there is a noticeable movement backwards and then forwards again in time (what might in narratological terms be described as analepsis) relatively early on in the narrative.⁶⁹ Having progressed in a chronological manner from paragraph 17 to paragraph 33 (the death of Monobazus I and Izates's succession), Josephus suddenly backtracks, in paragraph 34 and the first part of paragraph 35, to Izates's stay in Charax Spasini (previously detailed in paragraphs 22 and 23) to record the introduction to Judaism of the women of Charax (34), and Izates' own introduction (35). The second part of paragraph 35 then leaps forward from Charax to Monobazus I's summons to Izates before he dies (previously para 24) and the third part of paragraph 35 introduces Helena's 'conversion' to Judaism (time unknown). Paragraph 36 (Izates's arrival to claim his kingdom) then closes the narrative gap by linking with paragraph 33 (Monobazus II makes way for Izates), leading on chronologically to paragraphs 37, 38 and the remaining text.

The narrative sequence can be represented diagrammatically through time as follows.

Table 2

Time	Paragraph		Narrative ordered by time	Possible Source
	Non-Jewish	Jewish		
↓	22-23		Izates is sent to Charax and is welcomed there.	1
		34	Ananias wins over the court women.	2
		35 (1)	Izates won over.	2
	24-25		Monobazus summons Izates back.	1
		35 (2)	Ananias accompanies Izates.	2
		35 (3)	Helena similarly won over.	2
	26-33		Izates lives in Carron, Monobazus dies. Izates called back to be king.	1
	36		Izates arrives and sees his kinsmen in chains	3
	37		and sends his kinsmen to Rome and Parthia.	3
		38-48	The circumcision narrative.	4

⁶⁹ The counterpart, prolepsis, can be observed in 20.48 where Josephus foretells of the dangerous events that will be averted by God.

The narrative is extremely convoluted and contains both numerous switches in time but also inconsistencies and it is proposed there are potentially four sources from which Josephus drew the material contained in 20.22-48: 20.22-33 (Source 1), 20.34-35 (Source 2), 20.36-37 (Source 3), and 20.38-48 (Source 4).

The first and obvious conclusion is that 20.34-20.35 (conversion in Charax and Helena's conversion) was inserted from another source into a narrative that otherwise appears to run chronologically from 20.33 (Izates's arrival to succeed to the throne) to 20.36-48 (Izates discovers his brothers in chains through to his circumcision).⁷⁰

It is even possible that 20.36-37 (Izates's arrival after his father's death and dealing with his brothers in chains) comes from a source different from both 20.34-35 (conversion in Charax) and the predecessor source 20.17-20.33 (Izates's early life). In relation to 20.34-35, 20.36-37 is clearly different in time and subject matter. In relation to 20.17-20.33, it is inconsistent. We are told (20.24) that Monobazus presented Izates with the district of Carron upon his return to Adiabene, where he then resided until his father's death (20.25-6). Albeit we do not know where Carron was, it is described by Josephus as a *χώρα*, which seems to indicate that it was part of the kingdom. However, in 20.36 we are told that Izates came back to *Adiabene* on his father's death, notwithstanding that he had already been residing in Carron since returning from Charax.⁷¹ A single original source may have been careless or there are two different sources.

However, there is also a likely discontinuity of source between 20.38-20.48 (the 'circumcision episode') and the preceding two paragraphs (20.36-37, the brothers in

⁷⁰ Per Barish (1983) p. 31.

⁷¹ For another simple example of carelessness or different sources, see *BJ* 5.147, where Josephus describes Helena as the *daughter* of Izates (Ἀδιαβηνὴ βασίλισ ἦν αὕτη Ἰζάτου βασιλέως θυγάτηρ).

chains). The circumcision episode starts in 20.38 with the words ‘When Izates had learned that his mother was very much pleased with the Jewish religion, he was zealous to convert to it himself’. This is a somewhat abrupt and inelegant introduction to a major part of the narrative and sits somewhat oddly with the previous text (20.36-37) regarding Izates sending hostages abroad upon becoming king.

In addition, it is also unlikely that the circumcision episode (20.38-20.48) comes from the same source as the ‘inserted’ passage of 20.34-20.35 (conversion in Charax and Helena’s conversion).⁷² The text which initially informs us of Helena’s ‘conversion’ (20.35 (3)) immediately follows the narrative in paragraph 20.34 and 20.35(1) (the Charax episodes) and 20.35(2) (Izates’s recall by Monobazus), therefore encouraging the reader to assume some near coincidence in timing. However, the narrative in paragraph 20.38 (‘when Izates had learned that his mother was very much pleased with the Jewish religion’) would seem to indicate that Izates only noticed these practices upon becoming king. The conclusion is either Izates was somewhat unobservant (as presumably he could have noticed Helena’s Jewish practices or have been told about them upon his return from Charax and residence in Carron), or that the two passages cannot be reconciled as they come from different sources.⁷³ In addition, the circumcision episode in 20.38-48 describes, as a moment of drama, Helena attempting to persuade Izates not to be circumcised because, if his subjects were to discover that he was devoted to foreign rites, they would rebel (20.39). This does not make much sense because, following the narrative in 20.24/20.35 (Izates’s return at Monobazus’s request), Izates’s subjects presumably knew he was already following Jewish practices upon his return from Charax and during his stay in Carron.

⁷² Contra Barish (1983) p. 44, who sees all the ‘religious’ narrative from a single source. For Barish, the religious narrative also includes 20.36-37 (the ‘hostages solution’).

⁷³ The possible inconsistency is remarked upon by Barish (1983) pp. 32-33 but without conclusion.

Moreover, the phrase ‘when Izates had learned that his mother was very much pleased with the Jewish religion, he was zealous to convert to it himself’, if the translation is correct, appears to sit oddly with the previous text concerning Charax, thus potentially indicating a second source who was either unaware of the events in Charax or perhaps felt that they were of a different nature and quality to the events in Adiabene. This oddity goes to the heart of the many complexities surrounding any conclusion as to what Josephus was telling his reader in the narrative that describes Izates’s transition from non-Jew to Jew and is discussed further in Chapter 6.

Of course, the potential multiplicity of sources does not of itself explain the ordering; a chronological tale could have been constructed (as the above table illustrates). However, it is possible that this analepsis could have been deliberately constructed by Josephus (albeit clumsily), who appears to have wanted his reader to view 20.34-20.48 as a single passage, as indicated by his use of markers (‘beginning’ section καθ’ὃν δὲ χρόνον 20.34, end section ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ὕστερον ἀπαγγελοῦμεν 20.48) as shown above. The effect of the concatenated ‘conversion’ episodes (34, 35(1), 35(2) and 35 (3)) leading almost without a break (made only to emphasise Izates’s piety by his treatment of his half-brothers (36-37)) into the circumcision narrative (38-48), is to enhance the ‘Jewish’ aspect of the tale and to provide a steady build up to the crucial mid-point of the entire narrative, in paragraph 48, the statement that God rewards the pious who trust in him. We have had by this stage a small glimpse of Izates’s piety in dealing piously with his relatives and a very significant glimpse in his willingness to be circumcised. We then receive further substantial evidence of both Helena’s and Izates’s piety in Jerusalem (49-53), setting the stage for the remainder of the narrative, the proof text of reward for those pious people.

2.9. Other apparent illogicalities and inconsistencies in the text

There are a number of other places where Josephus's narrative appears to contradict itself or, against other evidence, appears likely to be incorrect, either through simple error or because Josephus strains to make a point.

The narrative is perhaps most obviously internally inconsistent when we are also told that Monobazus, Izates's brother, and their kinsmen decided to adopt the practices of the Jews, on seeing that Izates' pious worship of God 'had won the admiration of all men' (20.75), only then for the narrative to continue immediately (20.76) with the statement that the nobles were angry at Monobazus's adoption of Jewish practices. Here it would simply appear that Josephus's obvious enthusiasm for pushing the merits of Jewish practice has run away with itself. It is also possible that this is a somewhat artificial insertion into the narrative to create a *casus belli* from which Izates emerges victorious. That Monobazus's 'conversion' was seen as relatively uninteresting by Josephus can be seen from the fact that the introduction to the narrative in 20.17 mentions the conversion of Helena and Izates, but makes no mention of Monobazus. Similarly, Josephus exaggerates Izates's popularity when he states (20.28) that all the influential people supported Izates in preference to his jealous half-brothers, notwithstanding that they would have had their own supporting relationships amongst the aristocracy.

A slightly more complicated example of this occurs in the passage describing relations between Izates and Vardanes (20.69-74), where the narrative is similarly illogical. Vardanes is dissuaded from attacking Rome by Izates (20.71) but, in a non-sequitur, is said to have decided to attack Izates (20.72). Then, in a further non-sequitur, a palace coup by Vardanes's brother Cotardes occurred, as a result of the Parthians hearing of Vardanes's decision to march against the Romans (20.73), notwithstanding that Josephus has just told

us (20.71) that Izates *dissuaded* Vardanes from marching against Rome. The most logical explanation is that Josephus is bending the narrative (albeit clumsily) not only to show that it was God who intervened to ‘cut short Vardanes’s expectations’ (20.72) but also that God is on the side of the Romans (a theme articulated repeatedly in the *Jewish War* as an explanation for the Jews’ defeat).⁷⁴ Josephus is at pains to tell us, as a precursor to the episode, that Izates knew the might and fortune of the Romans (20.70) and constantly described their ‘resources and achievements’ (20.71). The somewhat tangled narrative allows Josephus to show that Parthia’s war on Rome was averted with God’s help.

It is also possible that subtle praise for Rome is present in 20.37. Josephus’s chronology is odd in describing the dispersal of Izates’s half-brothers as hostages to Claudius and Artabanus. Artabanus does not appear to have lived beyond 38 CE⁷⁵ and Claudius did not commence his Principate until 41 CE, upon the death of Gaius. On the assumption that Izates gained his kingdom in 38 CE (see below for dating), there are several possible reasons for the error. Josephus could of course merely have been confused as to the dates of Izates’s and/or Claudius’s succession. It may however be that he knew that hostages were in fact sent to Gaius, but did not want to advertise that Izates had had dealings with that much reviled emperor or, alternatively, perhaps the hostages had in fact only been sent east and that sending hostages to Claudius was a figment of Josephus’s imagination, inserted to reinforce Izates’s supposed loyalty to Rome.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ See for example *BJ* 2.390, 4.323, 5.19, 5.367, 5.368, 5.412, 6.399, 6.411, 7.360.

⁷⁵ See Debevoise (1938) p.166.

⁷⁶ Cass. Dio 58.26.1–4 makes no mention of hostages from Adiabene, nor does Tacitus in *Annals* Book 6; the books of the *Annals* dealing with the reign of Gaius and the first 6 years of Claudius are lost. For a further analysis of Josephus’s bending of history to show Izates’s loyalty to Rome, see Chapter 5 pp. 133–4.

2.10. The dating of the Adiabene narrative

The Adiabene narrative is positioned in the *Antiquities* as *AJ* 20.17-96, and the crux of the narrative is ostensibly chronologically after the events of 35-36 CE mentioned in *AJ* 18.98-105 (Tiberius's treaty of friendship with Artabanus). However, the text commences with the words *Κατὰ τοῦτον δὲ τὸν καιρὸν*,⁷⁷ encouraging the reader to locate the passage temporally with the previous passage or passages, and its positioning follows a narrative (20.6-14) concerning a dispute between Fadus, the somewhat insensitive Procurator of Judaea between 44 and c. 46 CE, and the Judaeans concerning the custody of the High Priest's robes. This was settled by Claudius in favour of the Judaeans, apparently in a letter dated 28th June 45 CE.⁷⁸ This is followed by a short passage, *AJ* 20.15-16, where Herod of Chalcis obtained control from the emperor Claudius over the appointment of the High Priesthood, whereupon he removed the high priest Cantheras and substituted Joseph, son of Camei. The identification of the first of these priests is somewhat uncertain,⁷⁹ but the timing would appear to be between the accession of Herod of Chalcis in 44 CE and the substitution of Tiberius Julius Alexander for Fadus in c. 46 CE.⁸⁰ The Adiabene narrative is then followed firstly by a short passage (*AJ* 20.97-99) regarding Fadus's execution of the false prophet Theudas, and another (*AJ* 20.100-104) on the procuratorship of Tiberius Julius Alexander between c. 46 and 49 CE.

The reader is therefore invited to view the conversion element of the Adiabene narrative as occurring within a relatively short time period of no more than two years from 44 to 46 CE, a timespan accepted by Schiffman.⁸¹ However, if we accept that Gotarzes, son of

⁷⁷ This phrase, or a rearrangement of the words in it, occurs 17 times in the *Antiquities*, in every case meaning 'around this time'.

⁷⁸ *AJ* 20.14. Feldman LCL 456 p. 9 note g.

⁷⁹ See Feldman LCL 433 p. 377 note a. and LCL 456 p. 11 note b.

⁸⁰ In line with Schürer (1973-1986) vol. II p. 231 and n. 14. See generally Smallwood (1962) and Horsley (1986) on the High Priesthood in the first century CE.

⁸¹ Schiffman (1987) p. 294.

Artabanus, seems to have succeeded Artabanus around 38/39 CE,⁸² and the conversion of Izates took place before he met with Artabanus, then Schiffman cannot be right, and a somewhat earlier date for the conversion narrative must be correct. Taking c. 60/61 CE as the latest date for Izates's death, as Tacitus describes Monobazus as King of Adiabene by then,⁸³ and a date as early as c. 56/57 CE as possible,⁸⁴ Josephus's statement that Izates reigned for 24 years and was 55 years old when he died (*AJ* 20.92) produces the following chronology:⁸⁵

Table 3

2-5 CE	Izates born
20-30	Charax Spasini
33-36	Becomes King
34-37	Circumcision
35-38	Restoration of Artabanus
46-47	Famine in Jerusalem
56-57	Encounter with Vologeses
57-60	Izates dies

2.11. Summary and conclusions

The narrative is both deliberately structured and well signposted. It has five principal topics.

- An introduction (20.17), telling the reader that the story is about Izates and Helena's conversion to Judaism.
- A portrait of the young Izates (20.18-33), which tells of his youth and succession to the throne of Adiabene.
- The royal family's conversion to Judaism (20.34-53), including a detailed examination of Izates's decision to have himself circumcised.
- Izates and his relations with foreigners, particularly Parthia (20.54-91).
- The death of Izates and Helena (20.92-96).

⁸² See Debevoise (1938) pp. 166-167 for dating.

⁸³ *Ann.* 15.1.

⁸⁴ As beyond that date, Vologeses was involved primarily, per Tacitus (*Ann.* 13.37.6, 14.25.2, 15.1.1) and Josephus (*AJ* 20.91), with insurrection by Hyrcania on the north eastern border of Parthia.

⁸⁵ Rajak (1998) p. 319 also sees Izates's reign as c. 33-57 CE.

As such, it displays the form of a biography, a βίος, albeit that the narrative is presented as a history, with an element of the fabulous, from which the reader can draw a specific conclusion, namely that the Jewish God is all powerful and rewards those who demonstrate piety to him. It is not possible to determine the source, or sources of the narrative, albeit that there are likely to have been several, particularly for the conversion narrative, and it is highly likely that Josephus would have supplemented any written sources available to him with oral ones.

The narrative order in the early part of the text seems to have been bent out of chronological shape to emphasise the aspects of conversion, the ostensible subject matter of the narrative, in an holistic manner. There is also other evidence of narrative structuring, to show manipulation of the material for a purpose or purposes, in particular the patently unbelievable scene of the meeting between Artabanus and Izates, which is used to demonstrate Izates's quality of humility. In addition, Vardanes's declaration of war on Izates for no good reason, and Cotardes's palace coup against Vardanes for daring to go to war with Rome, puts Josephus in a position where he can show the strength and might of Rome, Izates's appropriate respect for this and that some right-minded people (for example Cotardes) thought the same way. Lastly, Monobazus's embrace of Judaism, having seen that Izates had won the admiration of all for his own conversion, is used to provide a reason for the Adiabene nobles rising up against one who, we are told, was so obviously admirable.

Josephus uses language and structure to dramatic effect to increase tension in the narrative and thus keep his readers interested, using specific scenes in the text to reinforce this. Examples include the introduction of the fabulous dream sequence, the tension surrounding the jealous brothers, Helena and Ananias's panic, the treachery of the Adiabenian nobles in league with Abias, Izates's entreaties to God and the miraculous disappearance of

Vologeses. In addition, the temporal shifts (analepsis) in the early part of the narrative, as well as emphasising the conversion aspect, break up the rhythm of the narrative, thus giving it added interest. The ostensible message from the narrative, repeated frequently as the narrative progresses, is that the Jewish God is all-powerful and rewards with his *pronoia* those who worship him with piety.

At this stage in the thesis, the analysis has been confined to an internal perspective and the text has been examined to determine apparent structure, literary technique and ostensible messages, showing particularly the starkly positive message of the benefits of adhering to the Jewish God's commandments. The remainder of the thesis attempts to put the Adiabene narrative in context. Firstly, in relation to the *Jewish Antiquities*, what relationship, if any, does the narrative have to the work as a whole, particularly in its choice of subject matter and apparent messages? Secondly, what is Josephus saying in the Adiabene narrative and why is he saying this? Chapter 5, *The Adiabene narrative within the context of the Jewish Antiquities* attempts to answer these questions. In particular, given the prominence of the 'conversion' element of the narrative, what is Josephus's message specifically in relation to this part of the narrative? This is examined in Chapter 6, *Conversion in the Adiabene narrative*. Lastly, based on the analysis in Chapter 4, *The historiographical and historical context of the Adiabene narrative*, what reactions would Josephus's readers have had upon reading the Adiabene narrative? In particular, how would they have reacted to the most prominent features of the narrative, namely its location in Parthia, the hero as a member of an Eastern royal family, his incestuous conception and the portentous announcement of his birth, his character, the focus on circumcision within the narrative, the good deeds of Helena and Izates and the role of God and Fate. This is examined in Chapter 7. *The Adiabene narrative in Domitianic Rome*.

Chapter 3

The literary context of the Adiabene narrative: The nature, purpose and messages of the *Jewish Antiquities*

3.1. Introduction

This chapter examines the nature, purpose and messages of the *Jewish Antiquities* as a complete work, in order to place the Adiabene narrative within an overall framework and context. It reviews the subject matter of the *Antiquities* and the structure of the work and then examines what Josephus said were the reasons for writing the *Antiquities* and what can be discovered from the totality of the text which might support, or conflict with, his stated objectives and messages. Lastly, with particular relevance to the Adiabene narrative, the chapter examines Josephus's approach in the *Antiquities* to conversion to Judaism generally and circumcision of would-be male converts in particular. The conclusions drawn in this chapter then assist in analysing, in Chapter 5, the extent to which the Adiabene narrative falls within or complements the framework of the *Antiquities* as a whole, and the extent to which it stands apart from the rest of the work.

3.2. Subject Matter

Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* comprises twenty volumes and contains a little over 300,000 words.⁸⁶ It was published, at least initially, in 93/94 CE, the thirteenth year of Domitian's reign, and the fifty sixth year of Josephus's life (20.267). It has been argued unconvincingly

⁸⁶ Niese Edition (1885-1895). Thesaurus Linguae Graecae website http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/canon/wsearch?wtile=526&nperpage=all&uid=0&GreekFont=Beta&mode=c_search accessed 11/2/2015.

that there was a second edition some years later.⁸⁷ The apparent subject matter of the *Antiquities* comprises a history of the Jewish people over the period, in broadly chronological order, from the biblical account of the Creation to the events of 66 CE that immediately preceded the Jewish War. Josephus's history moves from a retelling of the Old Testament narrative to a post-biblical account of the Jews in Palestine and the immediately surrounding countries, but also includes other material, particularly, following the advent of the Romans to Syria/Palestine in the first century BCE, concerning Jews in Rome, Athens, Asia (modern day Turkey), Persia/Parthia and Armenia, together with non-directly Jewish related material in Rome, Egypt, Syria and Parthia.

3.3. Structure

An examination of the structure of the *Antiquities* is important in order to attempt to discover Josephus's aims and objectives. We know that the *Antiquities* was originally constructed by Josephus in a twenty book format because he tells us so,⁸⁸ and it is reasonable to suppose that the individual books have retained their original structure, in that all books either make apodotic use of δέ as second word in the book or have other distinctive phrases.⁸⁹ In addition there are markers which form a dramatic conclusion to most books, usually the death of a principal character⁹⁰ or a critical event in Jewish history,⁹¹ which would lead the reader to view each chapter as an integrated whole. The

⁸⁷ For a summary of the arguments, see Rajak (2002) pp. 237-8, who dismisses them. Similarly Barish (1978), Attridge (1984) pp. 210-211 and Feldman (1999) p. 913. Conversely, Schürer (1973-86) vol. I p. 54 cautiously approves of the argument for a second edition, as does Sievers (2001) p. 248.

⁸⁸ 20.267.

⁸⁹ 2.1 (δέ), 3.1 (δέ), 4.1 (δέ), 5.1 (δέ, τὸν προειρημένον τρόπον), 6.1 (ὡς προειρήκαμεν μικρὸν ἔμπροσθεν), 7.1 (δέ), 8.1 (ἐν τῇ πρὸ ταύτης βίβλῳ δεδηλώκαμεν), 9.1 (δέ), 10.1 (δέ), 11.1 (δέ), 12.1 (τὸν προειρημένον τρόπον), 13.1 (ἐν τῇ πρὸ ταύτης βίβλῳ δεδηλώκαμεν), 14.1 (δέ, ἐν τῇ πρὸ ταύτης ἡμῖν βίβλῳ δεδηλωμένων), 15.1 (ἡ πρὸ ταύτης ἡμῖν ἐδήλωσε βιβλος), 16.1 (δέ), 17.1 (δέ), 18.1 (δέ), 19.1 (δέ), 20.1 (δέ, καθὼς ἐν τῇ πρὸ ταύτης ἀπηγγέλαμεν βίβλῳ).

⁹⁰ Book 1, Isaac; 4, Moses; 6, Saul; 7, David; 8, Ahab; 12, Judas; 13, Alexandra; 14, Antigonos; 18, Gaius; 19, Agrippa I.

⁹¹ Book 2, Exodus; 5, Capture of the Ark; 9, Fall of Israel (albeit the origins of the Samaritans appear as a postscript); 10, Fall of Jerusalem; 15, Rebuilding of the Temple; 17, Roman annexation of Judaea.

books are of unequal length, the longest being perhaps twice that of the shortest, and the time span of each book varies from over 3,000 years (as Josephus counted the time span for Book 1) to 7 years (Book 19, 37 to 44 CE).

In terms of the possibility of a wider continuity of structure between the twenty books of the *Antiquities*, the scholarly view for the most part is that the work falls into two halves that pivot around the end of Book 10 and the return from Exile,⁹² or four parts, by subdividing the second half, Books 11-20, into three parts, 11-13, 14-17 and 18-20.⁹³ Mason additionally sees what he calls a ‘ring structure’ in the work as a whole, whereby themes are symmetrically paired across the 20 Books: Abraham (the first convert) in Book 1 with the Royal House of Adiabene (Book 20), the Jewish constitution in Books 3-4 with the Roman constitution in Books 17-18, and parallels between Saul and Herod from the middle of each half, to name but three examples, as well as a closing statement (20.259-68) that links back to the Proem.⁹⁴

The problem with much of this taxonomy is that it does little, if anything, to enlighten us about Josephus’s purpose and motives. Although it is an argument from silence, it is reasonable to point out that Josephus, who we will see is reasonably overt in other programmatic statements, would not have been shy in directing the reader to any particular taxonomy that he had created, but he did not do so. There is a strong argument to say that the twenty book structure is deliberate, perhaps as an echo to, among others, Dionysius of Halicarnassus’s *Roman Antiquities*, but that Josephus did not see a need to group the books. Indeed, anything that detracted from his proposition that the work should be read as a whole, and its presentation as near to Holy Scripture as he could persuade his reader, would

⁹² Thackeray LCL 242 p. xi and Thackeray (1929) pp. 58, 60.

⁹³ Attridge (1984) p. 213, Bilde (1988) pp. 89-92.

⁹⁴ Mason (2004) pp. xx-xxii. See Ellis (1991) pp. 345-8 for a detailed explanation of ring composition in Greek historiography.

have been counterproductive.⁹⁵ As is shown later in this chapter, the structure of the work as a whole is evident not particularly from its external form but from the continuity of themes throughout the work.⁹⁶

3.4. Ostensible purpose

Josephus's presents his ostensible motive in writing the *Antiquities*, of dispelling ignorance and engendering public benefit, in *AJ* 1.1-4. This is further explained in *AJ* 1.5-9⁹⁷ when he states that he has 'undertaken this present work in the belief that the whole Greek speaking world will find it worthy of attention' (1.5). This is however amplified (1.8) by a statement that there were certain persons curious about the history, above all Josephus's patron Epaphroditus.⁹⁸ He continues by comparing his efforts to the creation of the Septuagint under Ptolemy II (1.10-17),⁹⁹ assuming that there are 'still today many other lovers of learning like the king' (1.12).¹⁰⁰

What then, in particular, is this benefit to mankind that Josephus promises to share? Josephus tells his reader early on in the narrative, in one of the key paragraphs of the entire work. It is worth repeating in full:

But, speaking generally, the main lesson to be learnt from this history by any who care to peruse it is that men who conform to the will of God, and do not venture to transgress laws that have been excellently laid down, prosper in all things beyond belief (πάντα κατορθοῦται πέρα πίστεως), and for their reward are offered by God felicity (εὐδαιμονία); whereas in proportion as they depart from the strict observance of these laws, things (else) practicable become impracticable, and whatever imaginary good thing they strive to do ends in irretrievable disasters. (1.14).¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ See p. 44 for an analysis of Josephus's technique in this respect.

⁹⁶ A point also made by Mason (2012) p. 134.

⁹⁷ And repeated (by inference) in 14.1-3.

⁹⁸ Referred to as such in *Vita* 430, *C. Ap.* 1.1, 2.1, 2.296.

⁹⁹ Narrated at length by Josephus in 12.11-118.

¹⁰⁰ Attridge (1976) pp. 41, 43-44, 53 and 56 notes the similarity in style of the Proem to Dionysius, and characterises the tone as 'historical cliché'.

¹⁰¹ Trans. Thackeray LCL 242.

This didactic message is repeated in four subsequent programmatic statements. Firstly, in 17.60, Josephus tells the reader that he will narrate the whole story of Antipater, Herod's scheming son, and God's punishment on him for murdering his brothers, 'in order that it may be an example and warning to mankind to practice virtue (ἀρετή)¹⁰² in all circumstances'. Secondly, in 17.354, after having narrated the portentous dreams of Archelaus and his wife Glaphyra (17.345-353), Josephus states that he does not consider the narration of such dreams extraneous to his history because 'they provide instances of the way in which God's providence (προμήθεια) embraces the affairs of man'. Again, in 18.127, Josephus provides a digression on the descendants of Herod 'because it provides proof of Divine Providence (τοῦ θείου), showing how neither numbers nor any other worldly advantage can avail aught without acts of piety to the Divine Power'.¹⁰³ Similarly, Josephus tells his reader (19.15-16) that one of his motives for narrating at length the circumstances of the Emperor Gaius's death is that the story 'provides good evidence of God's power. It will comfort those who are in unhappy circumstances, and will teach a lesson in sobriety to those who think that good fortune is eternal and do not know that it ends in catastrophe unless it goes hand in hand with virtue'.¹⁰⁴ In summary therefore, the additional programmatic statements repeat in various ways his original proposition.

We also know from the Proem that Josephus says he was constrained to write the *Jewish War* 'in order to refute those who in their writings were doing outrage to the truth' (1.4). From that earlier work, we learn that such people were doing so 'either from flattery of the Romans or from hatred of the Jews' (*BJ* 1.2). These other (unnamed) writers apparently 'continually deprecate and disparage the actions of the Jews' (*BJ* 1.7). Although this theme is not elaborated in the Proem, the reader learns from later in the work that a fundamental

¹⁰² A concept discussed more fully later in this chapter (pp. 50-51).

¹⁰³ Trans. Feldman LCL 433.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

factor in writing the *Antiquities* is to dispel both ignorance of the Jews and anti-Jewish sentiment. As a precursor to quoting various Roman decrees favourable to the Jews (14.190-264), Josephus makes a statement (14.186-189) to the effect that he is publishing these favourable decrees because although both the Romans ('Kings of Europe')¹⁰⁵ and Seleucid and Persian kings ('Kings of Asia') have held Jews in esteem, positive writings about Jews by Persians and 'Macedonians'¹⁰⁶ are not in wide circulation and that enmity to the Jews exists.¹⁰⁷ Later, in Book 16, Josephus is more specific. In 16.174-178, after citing more Roman decrees favourable to the Jews (16.162-173), he states:

Now it was necessary for me to cite these decrees since this account of our history is chiefly meant to reach the Greeks in order to show them that in former times we were treated with all respect and were not prevented by our rulers from practising any of our ancestral customs. And if I frequently mention these decrees, it is to reconcile the other nations (τὰ γένη) to us and to remove the causes for hatred which have taken root in thoughtless persons among us as among them.¹⁰⁸

3.5. The causes of hatred

So why does this hatred arise? Josephus does not address this particularly systematically in the *Antiquities*, but gives us sporadic clues. Perhaps the most complete charge sheet is to be found in Josephus's retelling of the OT Book of Esther (11.212). The charge is brought by Haman, who accuses the Jews of being 'a wicked nation ... which was unfriendly and unsocial'¹⁰⁹ and neither had the same religion nor practiced the same laws as others and by its customs and practices was the enemy of the people and all mankind'.¹¹⁰ The charge is repeated shortly thereafter in Artaxerxes's edict, which in addition accuses the Jews of

¹⁰⁵ C.f. LCL 489 p. 101 note e. The point in relation to Rome is further emphasised in 14.265-267.

¹⁰⁶ Here presumably meaning Greek speakers.

¹⁰⁷ And see also the end of that section (14.265) where Josephus reaches out to 'all those who would read our work without malice'.

¹⁰⁸ Trans. Marcus & Wikgren LCL 410.

¹⁰⁹ A charge echoed by rebuttal in 16.177 'if we sincerely abide by them [the laws], they make us well-disposed and friendly to all men'.

¹¹⁰ Trans. Marcus LCL 365.

having ‘peculiar laws, being insubordinate to kings, is different in its customs, hates monarchy and is disloyal to government’.¹¹¹ From this passage alone, some themes emerge and the hatred appears to arise from a number of reasons: misanthropy/exclusivity, peculiarity of religion and way of life, troublemaking and disloyalty to their (foreign) rulers.¹¹² In addition, we shall see that insignificance and lack of any of the cardinal virtues are also accusations that appear from Josephus’s text to have been made against the Jews.

It is clear that Josephus sees these charges as the basis for antipathy to the Jews, and he is not shy in illustrating this hatred throughout his history. Jewish peculiarity of lifestyle and the Jews’ separate existence is key to the story of the Midianite women (4.137), the basis for Seleucid antagonism to the Hasmonaean state (13.245) and the reason for the Babylonian and Syrian hatred of Jews (18.371).¹¹³ As well as Haman’s charge of disloyalty, the Samaritans earlier accuse the Jews in their letter to Cambyses of being rebels and enemies of the kings (11.24) and a claim that Jews are also troublemakers can be discerned from Josephus’s recording of Nicolaus’s defence of the Ionian Jews: ‘even by honouring their own customs they caused no distress to others living there’ (16.59). In addition to Haman’s charges (11.212), Josephus himself tells us that ‘the hatred which men have for us’ results ‘from an idea that we slight the divinity whom they themselves profess to venerate’ (3.179). Additionally, in the tale of the Midianite women, the Jewish youths are encouraged to revere the Midianite gods, as proof of their love, implicitly showing that the exclusivity of the Jewish God caused ill feeling (4.137). Less explicit, but nonetheless important, is the accusation that Jews were an insignificant race. Josephus describes the *Antiquities* as an *ἀρχαιολογία*, an ancient history, in an environment where, as explained

¹¹¹ 11.217.

¹¹² Rebuttal of the accusation of misanthropy is a key theme of *Contra Apionem* (1.318, 2.121, 2.148, 2.258).

¹¹³ A list of Josephan references to racial tension involving Jews is given by Sterling (1992) p. 299 nn. 335 and 336.

below, racial antiquity equated to status and Josephus's almost obsessive detailing of chronology would lend support to a deduction that this was an issue.¹¹⁴

3.6. Josephus's efforts to rebut the charges – misanthropy, troublemaking and disloyalty and insignificance

Unlike the *Contra Apionem*, where Josephus appears to seek to address these charges against the Jews in a (relatively) direct polemical manner, in the *Antiquities*, for the most part, he attempts to rebut the accusations by more subtle means, mostly by building a series of character portraits of Jewish leaders that display the very qualities perceived to be lacking by critics of the Jews. He does, in addition, frequently portray non-Jewish historical characters as articulating expressions of approbation of the Jews and appreciation in them of admirable qualities.

Josephus, at least in part, accepts the charges of misanthropy when, attempting to make an explanation of the Jews' apparent antisocial attitude in not accepting a Seleucid garrison in Judaea (2c. BCE), he states that the Jews did not come into contact with other peoples because of their separateness (ἀμιξία) (13.247).¹¹⁵ However, for the most part he attempts to rebut the charge. Jews are not secret people (1.11), the Roman Senate's letter to John Hyrcanus talks of to a worthy and friendly people (ἀγαθός καὶ φίλος) (13.264), and the Jews of Ionia, through the mouth of Nicolaus of Damascus, claim that there is nothing hostile in their customs.¹¹⁶ Josephus also subtly adds to either Biblical stories or injunctions to Israel to make it plain that positive social intercourse is required of them by God to all mankind.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ See below (pp. 44) for a discussion of the meaning of the word ἀρχαιολογία in antiquity.

¹¹⁵ See also the explanation for circumcision being to keep Jews separate from others (1.192 and 4.102).

¹¹⁶ 16.42.

¹¹⁷ 2.94, 4.234-7, 4.275, 4.276, 6.342, 8.117.

As Josephus himself admits (14.186), it is by the almost continuous citation of official letters and decrees favourable to the Jewish people that he most obviously tries to rebut the charges of troublemaking and disloyalty and to show that those who have ruled over Jews have held them in high regard. Decrees from Babylon, Egypt, Seleucia fill Books 11, 12 and 13.¹¹⁸ Spartans, the legendary strongmen of the ancient world, from whom, putatively, the respected Italian tribe of the Sabines descended,¹¹⁹ request an alliance on the basis of common descent from Abraham (12.226). All these pale into insignificance besides the catalogue of treaties with and decrees from Rome which starts in Books 12 and 13 and culminates in extensive recitals of late Republican and early Empire decrees in Books 14 and 16, as well as more recent decrees by the Emperors Claudius in Book 19 and Nero in Book 20.¹²⁰

Although only briefly directly adduced in his own statements of purpose in the *Antiquities*,¹²¹ for Josephus it is also extremely important to be able to rebut the accusations of Jewish insignificance and to be able to adduce antiquity.¹²² Diodorus Siculus makes the point that a common racial claim was to be ‘autochthonous and the first of all men to discover the things which are of use in life, and that it was the events in their own history which were the earliest to have been held worthy of record’.¹²³ It has been argued that this was particularly important in first century BCE and first century CE Rome, which would

¹¹⁸ 11.12-18, 11.59-63, 11.104, 11.123-130, 11.273-283, 12.45-7, 12.119-121, 12.134-153, 13.48-57, 13.127-8.

¹¹⁹ From which tribe the Julio-Claudian emperors could claim ancestry (Tac. *Ann.* 11.24).

¹²⁰ 12.121, 12.416-8, 13.164-5, 13.165-170, 13.259-266, 14.145-155, 14.185-264, 14.267, 14.304-323, 16.48, 16.160-173, 16.174-5, 19.280-291, 20.183-4. Rajak (2006, p. 188) speculates that his motive may also have been to assist Diasporan communities by ‘as it were, [inscribing] the texts into history’. As to whether Diasporan communities might have read the *Antiquities*, see Chapter 4 pp. 88-9.

¹²¹ ‘The things narrated in the sacred Scriptures are innumerable, seeing that they embrace the history of five thousand years’ (1.13) and see also Josephus’s comparison of Moses’s birthdate ‘two thousand years ago, to which ancient date the poets never ventured to refer even the birth of their gods, much less the actions or laws of mortals’ (1.16) (Trans. Thackeray LCL 242).

¹²² C.f. C. *Ap.* 2.152 – ‘Each nation endeavours to trace its own institutions back to the remotest date’.

¹²³ Diodorus Siculus 1.9.3, trans. Oldfather LCL 279.

have liked a purer less corrupted past and had consequently constructed a fabricated national history that went back to the Trojan War and even further.¹²⁴

Josephus works hard to win the competition for racial antiquity and thus respectability at numerous points in the text, giving lists of dates and emphasising the span of years.¹²⁵ In particular, his use of the word ἀρχαιολογία is revealing. We first encounter the word in 1.5, where Thackeray translates this as *ancient* history. Indeed, this is the meaning of the word as used by other historians,¹²⁶ and Josephus elsewhere unambiguously uses it this way, for example in 1.94, when discussing the testimony of non-Jewish writers on the Flood, and in 1.107, where it is clear that Josephus is comparing himself with other writers of history of the distant past. However, Josephus's use of the word in the *Antiquities* in the closing summaries of the entire work in 20.259 and 20.267, which undoubtedly refer to history both ancient and current, is instructive. Since his closing summaries refer to, and deliberately echo, his opening summary, we are entitled to assume the same meaning in 1.5.¹²⁷ In short, Josephus is, without directly saying so, attempting to use the entire twenty volume work to support his agenda of proving antiquity.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Mason (2003a) pp. 103-104 and (2004) pp. xxiii-iv.

¹²⁵ 1.82, 1.148-50, 8.61-2, 9.280, 10.147-8, 10.185, 20.230-251, 20.259-261. The various datings are difficult to reconcile to one another.

¹²⁶ See for example Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who wrote *Ρωμαϊκή Αρχαιολογία* in the late first century BCE, ending his history in Book XX around 270 BCE, and whose use of the word clearly relates to the ancient past (1.4.2, 1.6.1, 1.31.1, 1.61.5). He also refers to Terentius Varro as having produced an *Αρχαιολογία* (1.14.1, 2.21.2) but Varro's work has not survived. See also Strabo *Geog.* (9.5.16, 11.14.12, 12.4.6) and Diodorus Siculus *Bib. Hist.* (1.9.5, 2.46.6, 4.1.4) for use of the word solely in an antique context. Diogenes Laertius also refers to a work by Cleanthes as bearing the title of *Αρχαιολογία* (7.175). See also, somewhat earlier, Plato *Hp. Mai.* 285d for similar usage. Rajak (1982) discusses at length the use of the term in ancient historiography.

¹²⁷ Josephus also uses this word to describe his history in *C.Ap.* 1.1, 1.54, 1.127, 2.136 and 2.287, all within the context of the 20 books, together with its use in *Vita* 430 when referring to the *Antiquities*, to which the *Vita* was appended. He uses the word as meaning *ancient* history in *C. Ap.* 1.2 and 1.4. However, he also uses the word ιστορία to describe the totality of his work in *AJ* 1.1, 1.3, 1.8, 1.14, 10.218, 18.127 and 20.261, and παλαιά ιστορία in *C. Ap.* 1.83 to mean ancient history. Of others' works (1.107-8) he uses ἀρχαιολογία to mean ancient history, as well as ἀναγραφή and the verbs συγγράφω and ιστορέω (to write a history).

¹²⁸ In this respect I disagree with Rajak (1982) p. 467 who believes that the term was only meant by Josephus to refer to the first half of the *Antiquities*. For a different analysis of Josephus's use of the word, see Feldman (1998b) pp. 10-12, where he appears to argue that Josephus is aligning himself with Hellenistic

In addition, in order further to rebut the charges of insignificance, Josephus promotes throughout the *Antiquities* a theme of non-Jews' respect for Jews and Jewish customs. Greeks revere the High Priest,¹²⁹ Balaam the heathen diviner calls Israel the greatest of nations¹³⁰ and Samaritans can revere the Jewish God at the Temple, 'as can other men' an aside showing both inclusiveness and prestige.¹³¹ A particular feature of the narrative of the *Antiquities* is the roll call of foreign monarchs impressed by the Jews, the Jewish God and Jewish customs, including Nebuchadnezzar,¹³² Darius,¹³³ Cyrus¹³⁴ Xerxes¹³⁵ and Alexander.¹³⁶ Josephus states that the Jews were appointed as overseers to Ecbatana, mausoleum of the Persian kings, by implication as a result of their fidelity to the regime.¹³⁷ Even Haman's friends appear to recognise the all-powerful nature of Mordechai's God.¹³⁸ In Egypt too, they are honoured, most notably by the various Ptolemaic monarchs.¹³⁹ Seleucids too honour Hasmonaean kings.¹⁴⁰ Ironically, even Antiochus IV Epiphanes, polluter of the Temple and persecutor of the Jews, sees the error of his ways on his deathbed, telling friends that his terminal illness was a result of harming the Jews and treating God with contempt.¹⁴¹ Romans evidencing respect include Pompey (14.72), Sossius (14.488), Agrippa (16.55), Vitellius (18.122), Petronius (18.281) and Claudius (20.11-14).¹⁴²

mythographers, an unlikely hypothesis if it is accepted that Josephus was keen to prove the Jews' antiquity, and hence respectability.

¹²⁹ 3.217.

¹³⁰ 4.114.

¹³¹ 11.87.

¹³² 10.139.

¹³³ 10.263-5.

¹³⁴ 11.3, 11.5.

¹³⁵ 11.120, 11.132, 11.279.

¹³⁶ 11.329-339. Sterling (1992) p. 304 n. 364 makes the point that the roll call of foreign rulers who helped with the construction of the Second Temple or who worshipped in it is lengthy.

¹³⁷ 10.265.

¹³⁸ 11.259, following the LXX 6.13.

¹³⁹ 12.11-118, 12.220, 13.71, 13.286-8, 13.349.

¹⁴⁰ 13.85, 13.243.

¹⁴¹ 12.386.

¹⁴² I disagree with Cohen (1987) p. 414 who asserts that Josephus 'tones down or omits the declarations of reverence for God which the Bible places in the mouths of Gentile dignitaries'. The evidence is to the contrary. See further my remarks on non-particularity later in this chapter (pp. 53-5).

Additionally, Josephus points in the *Antiquities* to groups of non-Jews who were clearly attracted to Jewish practices or wished to honour the Jewish Temple.¹⁴³

Additionally, in order to rebut further the charge that the Jews are an insignificant race, there is, throughout the *Antiquities* a constant assertion of the importance and glory of the Jewish people, and its principal characters. This is overt in 14.186, Josephus's articulation of his motives for quoting decrees (others' admiration of the Jews' bravery and loyalty), and elsewhere it is not far below the surface of the text. Feldman¹⁴⁴ analyses in considerable detail the estimable qualities of Josephus's biblical heroes, showing how illustrious genealogy, miraculous birth, precociousness, physical attractiveness, wealth, leadership and possession of the so-called cardinal virtues was possessed by the biblical Jewish heroes in Josephus's often extra-biblical narrative. In particular, he points out that these were all attributes that the Greco-Roman society around Josephus would have looked for in their own societal exemplars of worthy heroes.¹⁴⁵

Glory and military strength feature heavily. In particular, Moses is portrayed by Josephus as the successful military general (στρατηγός), as Holladay points out, by using a noun wholly absent from Moses's portrayal in the LXX.¹⁴⁶ Extra-scriptural military strength is a continuous theme, for example, Abraham defeats the Assyrians 'by ardour and mettle (προθυμία καὶ τὸ γενναῖον)', rather than numbers (1.178) (and this time without overt help from God, to reinforce the point) and David defeats neighbouring nations in spite of their overwhelming numbers (7.74-5). As an addition to 1 Maccabees, Josephus's apparent source for his history of the Hasmonaeans, we are told that Mattathias 'left behind him the

¹⁴³ See later in this Chapter (p. 61) and Chapter 6 (pp. 163-4) for further analysis of friendly Gentiles.

¹⁴⁴ Feldman (1998b) pp. 74-131.

¹⁴⁵ See also Attridge (1976) pp. 110-116. Friedman (2014) shows how Josephus shaped the narrative to minimise Jews' and Jewish heroes' servile origins. See Chapter 5 pp. 123-9 for a comparison of Izates's cardinal virtues with those of biblical heroes and Chapter 7 pp. 200-1 for a further discussion of cardinal virtues in the Greco-Roman world.

¹⁴⁶ Holladay (1977) pp. 69-71.

greatest and most glorious of memorials - to have freed his nation and rescued them from slavery to the Macedonians' (12.434).

In addition, the cardinal virtues have a specific and more complex role to play in the *Antiquities*, namely as part of a theology that links these attributes with the requirements of the Jewish God, and resultant success in life for those who exhibit such characteristics. This is examined below (pp. 49-51).

3.7. Josephus's efforts to rebut the charges – impiety and atheism and the Jewish code

It is, however, against the charges of impiety and atheism that Josephus is most overt in his defence. In so doing, he combines his rebuttal with a defiant construct that seeks to prove that adherence to the precepts of the Jewish God have brought success and that non-adherence has brought disaster. In this respect, Josephus, as we have said, makes a very clear programmatic statement at the beginning of the *Antiquities* (1.14) in relation to his theology: The Jewish God rewards obedience to his precepts with happiness (εὐδαιμονία) and punishes those who transgress.

In the first instance, Josephus attempts to align Jewish thought and practice with philosophy, thus implicitly claiming that the Jewish way of life is respectable.¹⁴⁷ In the remainder of the Proem, 1.18-26, not so far examined. Josephus starts this passage by claiming that almost everything contained in the *Antiquities* is dependent on 'the wisdom (σοφία) of our lawgiver Moses' (1.18). The remainder of the Proem is then constructed so as to forge a link between Jews, the Jewish God, natural philosophy (φυσιολογία) and virtue. The Proem's claims that Judaism is a philosophy is then continued throughout the *Antiquities*. Josephus's

¹⁴⁷ Mason (1991) p. 186 makes the point that by the first century CE, philosophy was not a technical academic discipline but a way of life with an emphasis on ethics and behaviour.

explanation of three Jewish sects and their views in 13.171-3 is referred to in 16.397-398 as a philosophical discussion and prominent individuals as philosophers. Abraham was a philosopher who taught the Egyptians natural science (1.166-8) and King Solomon is called a philosopher (8.44). Ptolemy, himself a philosopher (12.99), describes the Jewish laws as wise, coming from God. The renowned philosopher Menedemus admired the sages sent to Egypt to create the Septuagint (12.101), the sectarian beliefs of the Essenes, Sadducees and Pharisees, called αἱρέσεις in Book 13,¹⁴⁸ graduate (along with the so-called Fourth philosophy) to being called φιλοσοφίαι in Book 18¹⁴⁹ and Philo the Jewish Alexandrian statesman is described as ‘no novice in philosophy’ (18.259). Josephus presents himself, too, as philosophically trained (*Vita* 10-12) sampling what each of the three sects (αἱρέσεις) had to offer, by way of hard training and laborious exercises, as well as undertaking a stint with an ascetic guru called Bannus. The Pharisees are described as a ‘sect having resemblance to that which the Greeks call the Stoic school’ (*Vita* 12).

In addition to presenting Judaism as a philosophy, Josephus attempts to present its code as a constitution, similarly attempting to show that Jewish behavioural norms are civilised. Josephus calls Moses ὁ νομοθέτης, the lawgiver, twenty times in total¹⁵⁰ in the *Antiquities* (seven times in the Proem alone) and on only one occasion (1.18) does he feel the need to identify the Lawgiver by his name, presumably believing that the likes of such writers as Hecataeus, Strabo and Pompeius Trogus will have already introduced Moses to a Gentile audience.¹⁵¹ In the Proem (1.10), we learn that Ptolemy Philadelphus, supposed instigator of the Septuagint, was keen to have ‘our Law (νόμος) and the political constitution (πολιτεία) based thereon translated into Greek’ and it was Moses who was committed to

¹⁴⁸ 13.171, 13.288 and 13.293. However, the Pharisees philosophise (φιλοσοφοῦσιν, 13.290).

¹⁴⁹ 18.9, 18.11, 18.23 and 18.25. See also *BJ* 2.119.

¹⁵⁰ 1.6, 1.15, 1.18, 1.20, 1.23, 1.24, 1.95, 1.240, 3.180, 3.187, 4.6, 4.13, 4.150, 4.156, 4.263, 4.322, 8.192, 11.77, 12.110, 18.264.

¹⁵¹ On Moses’s status in the Gentile world, see generally Gager (1972), particularly Chapters 1 and 2.

writing down the Jewish constitution and laws (3.213), a constitution established by God (3.323). Josephus uses the word *πολιτεία* extensively, particularly in Book 4 when describing the Pentateuchal laws,¹⁵² but also in later exegesis of the OT when describing the political scene in the biblical books of Judges and Kings, adding an impression of respectability, not only to Jewish religious observance, but also its society. He repeats this theme when summarising the ambit of the twenty books in the concluding chapters, referring to differing forms of rule as aristocratic and monarchic constitutions (20.251).

So, what does the all-powerful Jewish God want from the Jewish people, through the application of his code? God himself appears to answer the question, in Josephus's elaboration of Samuel's dialogue with God in the OT¹⁵³ when choosing a replacement for Saul from the sons of Jesse: 'I seek one who ... [is] adorned with piety (*εὐσεβεία*), justice (*δικαιοσύνη*), fortitude (*ἀνδρεία*) and obedience (*πειθοῖ*), whereof beauty of soul consists' (6.160).¹⁵⁴ Of these characteristics, piety¹⁵⁵ or piety coupled with justice,¹⁵⁶ are repeatedly articulated as the prime characteristics demanded by the Jewish God. Along with the first two characteristics, Samuel claims that prosperity (*τὰ ἀγαθά*) and victory over foes will come if the Israelites are righteous (*δίκαιοι*) (6.21). Solomon too, is advised that the Hebrews should act with righteousness (*τὰ δίκαια*) (8.126), Hezekiah is upright (*χρηστή*) as well as pious and just (9.260) and Simon the High Priest is called the Just because of his

¹⁵² 4.193, 4.196, 4.312.

¹⁵³ 1 Sam 16:7.

¹⁵⁴ Trans. Thackeray and Marcus LCL 490. This formula is reworked in the *Contra Apionem* to a statement that 'we possess a code excellently designed to promote piety (*εὐσέβειαν*), friendly relations (*κοινωνίαν*) with each other, and humanity towards the world at large (*φιλανθρωπίαν*), besides justice (*δικαιοσύνην*), hardihood (*καρτερίαν*) and contempt of death (*θανάτου περιφρόνησιν*)' (2.146) (Trans. Thackeray LCL 186).

¹⁵⁵ For example 4.181, 5.116, 8.124, 8.208, 9.2, 9.265, 9.267, 12.140, 14.257, 15.267, 16.42, 17.159.

¹⁵⁶ For example 6.265, 7.338, 7.341, 7.356, 7.374, 7.384, 8.208, 8.280, 8.300, 8.314, 10.50, 15.375, 15.376.

piety and benevolence (εὐνοῖαν) (12.43).¹⁵⁷ Somewhat later, Herod advises his troops that ‘those who have justice (δίκαιόν) with them, have God with them’ (15.138).

It is also noticeable that throughout the *Antiquities*, Abrahamic descent alone does not suffice to win God’s favour, a point that in reverse becomes pertinent in the Adiabene narrative. To give two examples, firstly the Israelites were defeated, having decided to fight the Canaanites in defiance of Moses’s injunction, because they assumed that God looked after them ‘out of regard for their ancestors’ (4.2). Secondly, the Israelites who sacrilegiously erected an altar the wrong side of the Jordan ultimately recognise that descent from Abraham is not sufficient to excuse the transgression (5.113). In both cases, it is obedience to the law that God requires.¹⁵⁸

The importance of possession of the cardinal virtues as a means of demonstrating the impressive nature of Jewish heroes has already been mentioned in this chapter, and alongside εὐσέβεια and δικαιοσύνη in the *Antiquities* sits ἀρετή. For Josephus it is critical for ἀρετή to play an important part in the narrative of the *Antiquities*, and the word occurs over 200 times, appearing in every book other than Book 20.¹⁵⁹ For Josephus, it is a portmanteau word and, depending on the context, can mean talent, valour, excellence or virtue. However, ἀρετή as virtue, is, particularly in the first 11 Books, crucial to Josephus’s narrative in showing that reward from God is earned, not automatically deserved. It is, in effect, a collective noun for piety and the other characteristics elaborated in 6.160. We know immediately from the beginning of Book 1 that virtue is important to Josephus. In his Proem

¹⁵⁷ In the same vein, Joseph and his forefathers are described as pious (2.196), as is Amram (2.212), Joshua (3.49), Solomon (8.13), David (8.196), Asa (8.290) (and courageous (8.315)), Jehoshaphat (9.16) (and just (8.394)), Hezekiah (9.276), Josiah (10.51) and Agrippa (20.12).

¹⁵⁸ Josephus thus largely dispenses with the OT concept of covenant in respect of the land, in favour of a more ‘Deuteronomistic’ approach of practice of God’s commandments. See Halpern-Amaru (1994), Spilsbury (1998) pp. 70-71 and (1998b).

¹⁵⁹ See also *C. Ap.* 2.192: ‘Him must we worship by the practice of virtue’. The likely effect on his readers of Josephus’s focus on ἀρετή in his heroes is discussed in Chapter 7 pp. 200-201.

to Book 1, God has the perfection of virtue (1.23) and Moses has trained the Jews in virtue (1.6), it is virtue which enables the Israelites to receive God's providential care (4.185),¹⁶⁰ and even Josephus's patron, Epaphroditus, is possessed of the quality (1.8). All the patriarchs possessed virtue, as did many of the other biblical heroes.¹⁶¹ However, Josephus reserves the most persistent praise for Moses, who is described as possessing virtue no less than 16 times,¹⁶² and most tellingly, in Moses's deathbed speech to the Israelites, he stresses four times the need to practice virtue if God's rewards are to be available.¹⁶³

Post biblically, Josephus's emphasis is different. Rather than specifically imbue the characters with virtue, he uses homiletic asides to reinforce the point. For example, the story of the downfall of Antipater, Herod's scheming son, is prefaced by Josephus's explanation that he will 'relate the whole story of this in order that it may be an example and a warning to mankind to practise virtue in all circumstances' (17.60). Having then related the story of Antipater's dastardly deeds and subsequent trial, Josephus comments that it is a mistake for 'those who are lacking in virtue to rule out the Deity's intervention in all matters', as God will find them out (17.129).¹⁶⁴

What does ἀρετή bring? For Josephus, it brings God's πρόνοια, His providence, to both the Jewish people as a whole and to those individuals who practice ἀρετή, which Spilsbury likens to a patron-client relationship prevalent at the end of the 1st century CE.¹⁶⁵ Josephus

¹⁶⁰ Albeit being later defined as adhering to God's covenants and not following the ways of other nations (5.98).

¹⁶¹ Abraham, 1.155, 1.165, 1.183, 1.256; Isaac 1.222, 1.346; Jacob 1.280; Joseph 2.9, 2.40, 2.198; Gideon 5.230; Samuel 6.292; Saul 6.346; David 6.160, 7.390, 8.1; Solomon 8.49, 8.53, 8.165, 8.182.

¹⁶² 2.205, 2.238, 2.257, 3.12, 3.65, 3.74, 3.97, 3.187, 3.192, 3.317, 3.322, 4.196, 4.320, 4.321, 4.326, 4.331.

¹⁶³ 4.181, 4.182, 4.185, 4.190. Josephus subsequently links a violent storm to the Israelites' lack of virtue (6.93). See Holladay (1977) pp. 67-79 for a detailed analysis of the cardinal virtues of Moses, Abraham, Joseph, David and Solomon.

¹⁶⁴ See also 17.354, 18.13-14, 19.16 and 19.171 for further examples, and Attridge (1984) p. 221.

¹⁶⁵ See Spilsbury (2001-4) pp. 249-250. Attridge (1976) p. 75 makes the point that the word is largely absent from the LXX.

repeats this, through the mouths of his characters, on numerous occasions.¹⁶⁶ This is not necessarily unconditional, and Moses (4.185) makes the point (as does David (7.385)) that God will be the Israelites' protector without time limit so long as they remain in the paths of virtue (ἐν τοῖς τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐπιτηδεύμασι μένοντες).¹⁶⁷

In addition, he tells his readers that specific individuals are blessed with God's provenance. The list is long. Of the Jewish biblical heroes, Jacob,¹⁶⁸ Joseph,¹⁶⁹ Moses,¹⁷⁰ Samson,¹⁷¹ David,¹⁷² Solomon¹⁷³ and Daniel¹⁷⁴ are so blessed. In addition, Josephus tells us that Jonathan the Hasmonaean¹⁷⁵ and Agrippa II had the benefit of God's providence,¹⁷⁶ as did Josephus claim for himself.¹⁷⁷ Some Gentiles also apparently had this. Ptolemy (probably Philadelphus) claims this himself¹⁷⁸ (presumably such Providence was bestowed to enable him to sponsor the Septuagint), and Petronius¹⁷⁹ as a reward for not destroying the Temple, as ordered by the Emperor Gaius.¹⁸⁰ What is of note, when looking specifically at Jewish biblical individual recipients of God's πρόνοια, is that all are Jewish heroes and all, with the exception of Solomon, receive this to counter danger to themselves as individuals.

What does pronοia produce? In Josephus's view, blessedness (εὐδαιμονία) or a blessed life (βίος εὐδαίμων), a concept that occurs over 100 times in the *Antiquities* and a principal

¹⁶⁶ Moses (2.286, 3.99, 4.47, 4.185, 4.239, 4.316), Balaam (4.114), Phineas (5.107), David (7.95), Solomon (8.124), Jeremiah (10.177) and Nehemiah (11.169).

¹⁶⁷ See generally Attridge (1976) pp. 71-92.

¹⁶⁸ 2.8, 2.174.

¹⁶⁹ 2.60, 2.174.

¹⁷⁰ 2.219, 2.236, 2.286, 2.349, 3.13, 3.38. Gnuse (1996) makes the point that it may also be significant that Josephus relates an extra-biblical story (2.210-217) regarding a dream that Amram, Moses's father has, in which his future son's greatness as a saviour of his people is manifested.

¹⁷¹ 5.277, 5.312.

¹⁷² 7.95, 7.245.

¹⁷³ 7.338.

¹⁷⁴ 10.214, 10.260.

¹⁷⁵ 13.163.

¹⁷⁶ 18.197.

¹⁷⁷ *Vita* 15, 425, *BJ* 3.391.

¹⁷⁸ 12.47.

¹⁷⁹ 18.309.

¹⁸⁰ And Alexander, son of Antiochus Epiphanes, for no particularly good reason other than siding with Jonathan the Hasmonaean against Demetrius, King of Syria (13.80).

tenet of his theology.¹⁸¹ For Josephus ‘those who comply with the will of God and do not venture to transgress laws that have been well enacted succeed in all things and that happiness lies before them as a reward from God (καὶ γέρας εὐδαιμονία πρόκειται παρὰ θεοῦ)’ (1.14).¹⁸² It is noticeable that Abraham, Jacob and Joseph all are connected in the narrative multiple times with εὐδαιμονία.¹⁸³ Moses unsurprisingly is destined for εὐδαιμονία (2.217) and promises it to the Israelites along with an ordered government (πολιτεία),¹⁸⁴ as do Joshua and Caleb (3.308). Moses could not be clearer, in introducing his Laws (4.199), when he says that ‘if you do this, your actions will be pleasing to God, and you will have happiness that is established’.¹⁸⁵ The message is most pronounced in Josephus’s biblical paraphrase within the first eleven books, particularly as there is no corresponding concept in the Hebrew Bible, albeit in the latter nine books of the *Antiquities* Judas the Hasmonaean promises his troops liberty and the ability to regain a blessed and happy life, defined by Josephus as living in accordance with the Law (12.303).

3.8. Non-particularity

At times, Josephus is so intent to rebut the accusations of worshiping a strange god that he slides towards an apologetic presentation of the Jewish God as universalistic. The statement in 1.14 that happiness (εὐδαιμονία) comes from obeying God’s commandments appears to be a prescription for all mankind, not just Jews, and Josephus minimises focus on Israel’s special covenant and questions of land theology.¹⁸⁶ Josephus claims (1.24) that all in the

¹⁸¹ And as Mason (2003a) notes (pp. 113-114), εὐδαιμονία is not a word found in the LXX. For an extended discussion on the concept see Runia (2002).

¹⁸² Trans. Feldman (2004). See also 1.20.

¹⁸³ Abraham 1.155; Isaac 1.223, 224, 228, 234, 236; Jacob 2.7, 8, 10, 94, 214; Joseph 2.15, 17, 170, 168, 170, 198, 214.

¹⁸⁴ 3.84, 3.88, 3.296.

¹⁸⁵ Trans. Feldman (2004). See also 4.211. For further links between behaviour and prosperity, see 7.373-4, 7.380 (David); 8.126, 8.211 (Solomon); 8.296 (Azariah).

¹⁸⁶ See Mason (1996) p. 198-9 and references therein. See note 158 above.

Antiquities is in keeping with the nature of the universe (τῇ τῶν ὅλων φύσει). It is arguable whether even his description of Abraham's discovery of God's nature is truly monotheistic, in that his statement that God (1.155), 'the creator of the universe, is one, and if any other being contributed ought to man's welfare, each did so by his command', could equally well be a description of monolatry or henotheism and there is no explicit denial of any other gods.¹⁸⁷

In an effort to relate Jewish practices to the Greco-Roman world, the tabernacle and priestly vestments are presented in cosmological format (and hence universalistic),¹⁸⁸ and important non-Jews describe the Jewish god in non-particular terms,¹⁸⁹ noticeably in Josephus's retelling of the Letter of Aristeas.¹⁹⁰ Josephus also appears to attempt to universalise the Jewish God in other ways. God is called μέγιστος, perhaps in resonance with the Hebrew אל עליון but to a Greco-Roman reader possibly reminiscent of Zeus Megistos (15.385). Similarly, God is called ὕψιστος in an Augustan decree to the Jews of Asia (16.163) and Petronius, the philo-semitic procurator of Judaea, talks of 'the sovereign of all, almighty God' (18.280).¹⁹¹

However, other than his cosmological excursus, it can be seen that nearly all the other examples of a possible appeal to universalism are post-biblical, perhaps an indication of his reluctance to interfere too extensively with a biblical narrative that is doggedly particularistic, and his own beliefs regarding the supremacy of the Jewish God. Two extra-

¹⁸⁷ Trans. Thackeray LCL 242. Albeit elsewhere he is less ambiguous. See 3.91 'The first word teaches us that God is one and that He only must be worshipped' and 8.343 'The great and only true God'.

¹⁸⁸ 3.123, 3.132, 3.179-187, 11.55. Which may have resonated with those who espoused the Stoic doctrine of 'cosmic sympathy' (see Long (1974) pp. 221-2). Holladay (1977) pp. 82-89 also sees parallels with Stoicism (and Heraclitus).

¹⁸⁹ Queen of Sheba (8.173), Nebuchadnezzar (10.139), Ptolemy Philometor (13.70).

¹⁹⁰ Aristeas (12.21-3), Ptolemy (12.26, 12.90), as does Demetrius (12.37, 12.112-113).

¹⁹¹ In fact the story of Petronius is a striking example of Josephus's attempts at non-particularity, in that Petronius, as the biblical heroes, is rewarded by God, in Petronius's case for helping the Jews in their resistance to the erection of a statue of the Emperor Gaius in the Temple. See Appendix 1 to this Chapter for analysis of this.

biblical examples from the first 11 books will suffice. Elijah's triumph over the prophets of Baal gives him the opportunity to opine that the Israelites worshiped the Almighty and one true God, whereas other gods were 'mere names invented by unworthy and senseless opinion' (8.343). Again, Josiah urged the people 'to give up their belief in idols, which he said were not really gods' (10.50).

3.9. Power, reward and punishment

In addition to the philosophical aspect of Judaism so far examined, there is another aspect to Josephus's theology, namely the powerful force that is the Jewish God, linking the manly virtue of ἀνδρεία with an image of invincibility that demands respect. How does Josephus shape his history to illustrate this? In a long extra-biblical passage (2.20-28) in which Jacob's son Ruben attempts to dissuade his brothers from killing Joseph, Josephus, through indirect speech, makes Ruben advance several reasons, of which the foremost is because they should

fear God, who at that very moment was watching and witnessing their designs upon their brother and would be well content should they renounce the deed whereas should they proceed to accomplish it, there was no chastisement which He would not inflict for their fratricide upon those who had profaned His providence (πρόνοιαν), present in every place and from which nothing done ... could be hid' (2.23-24).¹⁹²

Nearly all the elements of Josephus's philosophy that underlie the statements of reward and punishment in 1.14 are present. God is powerful. In particular he is omniscient and omnipotent. He bestows his providence upon the Israelites, but will inflict punishment on those who scorn such providence.¹⁹³ These messages are repeated continuously throughout the *Antiquities*.

¹⁹² Trans. Thackeray LCL 242.

¹⁹³ See also Moses's last speech (4.176-95) which displays the same sentiments.

For Josephus, the Jewish God possesses both omniscience and omnipotence and Josephus presents God as watching over the Israelites in a series of extra-biblical comments. Moses beseeches God to ‘prove now once again that all is directed by thy providence, that nothing befalls fortuitously, but it is thy will that overrules and brings everything to its end’ (4.47).¹⁹⁴ God’s omniscience is asserted by Balaam (4.128), David (6.263, 6.307) and post biblically Aristobulus (13.316), and Herod is advised by Manaemus similarly that he will not be able to escape the notice of God (15.376).¹⁹⁵ Similarly, God is omnipotent, as expressed for example in Josephus’s commentary of Moses’s salvation as a baby, where he tells his reader that God plainly showed that ‘human intelligence (τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην σύνεσιν) is nothing worth, but that all that He wills to accomplish reaches its perfect end’ (2.222).¹⁹⁶ Zambrias boasts of his own free will (4.149), but is slain by Phineas for taking a foreign wife, God makes it clear to Gideon that his victory over the Midianites will be by grace of God, not effort of man (5.216), Samson erroneously does not attribute his strength to God (5.301) and, unsurprisingly, Josephus fulminates against the Epicureans who ‘exclude Providence (τὴν πρόνοιαν) from human life and refuse to believe that God governs its affairs’ (10.277-278).¹⁹⁷

God, for Josephus, is also an ally and a protector and, as well as εὐδαιμονία, God’s πρόνοια brings very specific benefits, to those who observe God’s precepts, when faced with adversity, as Moses points out to the Israelites on his deathbed speech (4.185). In particular, Josephus perceives God as an ally (σύμμαχος, a military metaphor) and protector (προστάτης, κηδεμών) to those in distress. For Abraham, God is supporter and ally (παραστάτης καὶ σύμμαχος) (1.229), Isaac hopes that God will be an ally and supporter of

¹⁹⁴ Trans. Thackeray & Marcus LCL 490.

¹⁹⁵ See also *C. Ap.* 2.166 for similar sentiments.

¹⁹⁶ Trans. Thackeray LCL 242. Perhaps better translated as ‘intention’.

¹⁹⁷ See also *C. Ap.* 2.160, in relation to Moses, ‘having first persuaded himself that God’s will governed all his actions and all his thoughts’, and 2.166 ‘no single action, no secret thought, could be hid from Him’.

Esau (τὸν θεὸν σύμμαχον αὐτῷ καὶ συνεργὸν) (1.268). God is an ally to the Israelites in their escape from Egypt (2.278) and Moses invokes God's alliance and aid before the parting of the Red Sea (2.334) and describes God as ally before entering Canaan (3.45 and 3.302). The Israelites, foolishly, see such alliance as unconditional and God as a perpetual ally (4.1-2). Balaam describes God as the Israelites' perpetual ally (4.114), with whom they will never be overwhelmed (4.127).

Josephus's recital of the Mosaic code (4.196-301) repeats Moses's view that God is the Israelites ally before battle (4.296), Joshua describes God as a gracious ally (5.98) and God accepts Samuel's sacrifice before battle in a spirit of alliance (6.25). David advances against Goliath with an invisible ally (6.189) and tells Solomon that he will have God as his protector (7.340), God is Elisha's ally (9.55), Hoshea did not have God with him as an ally (9.259) and Ezra encourages the Jews to return to Jerusalem as God will be their ally (11.7).

Post biblically, Mattathias the Hasmonaeon prays for God to be the Jews' ally (12.285) and Judas prays for God to be his ally (12.314). Herod's rallying cry to the troops, before battle with the Arabs, claims that those who have justice with them have God with them as an ally (15.138) and Agrippa I attempts to avert Gaius's statue being erected in the Temple by promising God as Gaius's ally (18.297).¹⁹⁸

The converse, punishment for transgression, is also abundantly true. In the Proem to the *Antiquities*, Josephus tells us that 'God, as the universal Father and Lord who beholds all things, grants to such as follow Him a life of bliss, but involves in dire calamities those who step outside the path of virtue' (1.20).¹⁹⁹ Disaster is inevitably attributable to

¹⁹⁸ A sentiment repeated in various ways in the narrative (see Appendix 1 to this chapter). See also Attridge (1976) pp. 78-9 who similarly sees a link between πρόνοια and σύμμαχος.

¹⁹⁹ Attridge (1976) pp. 159-165 notes that Josephus was not the only classical historian to present disaster as a function of divine retribution and both Polybius (e.g. 18.54.8-12), Dionysius of Halicarnassus (e.g. *Ant.*

transgression of God's laws, a moral amply illustrated for him by the authors of the Old Testament. For the most part, in the first 11 Books, Josephus needs to do little other than paraphrase the biblical story to make his point,²⁰⁰ albeit in a typically Josephan aside on the death of Nabal, Josephus tells the reader that David learned that 'the wicked are pursued by God who overlooks no act of man but repays the good in kind, while he inflicts swift punishment upon the wicked' (6.307).²⁰¹

In the post-biblical narrative, Josephus continues with his theme, in these instances almost certainly a gloss on his sources. Ultimately, lack of piety courts disaster, as can be seen from the fate of the Jerusalemites for killing Onias/Honi the rainmaker (14.25), Herod for neglect of piety (15.376, 17.170) and the Jews as a whole after Herod's death because they were corrupted by him into behaving with a lack of piety, a foretaste of the Jewish War (15.267). Antipater was punished for the murder of his brothers (17.60), it is by the design of God that Herod the Tetrarch and his wife Herodias are banished (18.255) and Gaius's death, removing the risk of punishment to the procurator Petronius for disobeying the emperor's orders, was God's payment of the debt to Petronius by the Jews for refusing to install Gaius's statue in the Temple (18.306). Josephus concludes his series of homilies on the subject of impiety and God's punishment by asserting that the impiety of the brigands (οἱ λησται), in the events leading up to the revolt in 66 CE, led to Roman triumph (20.166).²⁰²

Occasionally, Josephus appears to qualify this insistence on theological cause and effect, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly. In one well-known passage, Josephus, when

Rom. 1.4.2) and Diodorus Siculus (e.g. 15.48.1-4, 16.61.1-4) made use of the divine in this way. For further discussion of the Divine in Greco-Roman historiography, see Chapter 7 pp. 210-213.

²⁰⁰ For example 3.314, 4.8, 4.56, 4.154-5, 5.132-5, 5.168, 5.198, 6.93-4, 7.81, 7.374, 8.197, 8.362, 9.222-7, 9.281, 11.91, 11.141, 11.274.

²⁰¹ Trans. Thackeray and Marcus LCL 490. See also 7.45.

²⁰² See Chapter 2 n. 74 p. 30 for references to this in the *Jewish War*.

musings on Herod's domestic ills occurring after his ransack of David's tomb (16.188-193), states that

whether it was the wrath (of God) that caused just those ills from which he was already suffering to grow even worse and to develop into incurable misfortunes, or whether Fortune (τύχη) attacked him at a time so appropriate to the occasion as to provoke no little suspicion that these misfortunes had come upon him because of his impiety. (16.188)²⁰³

However, the only biblical example of direct qualification is that, when narrating Moses's unexplained absence from the Israelite camp on Mount Sinai (3.97), Josephus tells us that the sober minded (σώφρονες) held that to die under the fangs of a beast (Moses's potential fate) was a human accident (ἀνθρώπινος). Post-biblically, in addition to the example quoted above, the great famine in c. 25 BCE came about 'whether from God's being angry or because misfortune occurs in such cycles' (15.299) and Herod's madness was 'as if by divine punishment' (15.241). More subtly, he often introduces, beginning even in the biblical narrative, the words 'I believe' (οἶμαι) to qualify his statements on God's intervention.²⁰⁴

An explanation could be that, although for the most part, Josephus very firmly steers his reader towards a world controlled by God, at least for the major events, he may genuinely, appear to allow for the possibility of happenstance, but only in respect of relatively inconsequential events. However, it is perhaps more likely that his apparent equivocation is a stylistic device designed to enhance the appeal of a narrative centred upon a Jewish, and therefore foreign, God to a Gentile Greco-Roman audience, rather than as a demonstration of his own wavering belief.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ Trans. Marcus LCL 410.

²⁰⁴ 8.216, 8.241, 9.199, 10.76, 10.215, 11.237, 13.314. A turn of phrase also used in the *BJ* (see for example *BJ* 2.539). See also 9.213: 'As for Jonah, the story has it (τὸν δὲ λόγος) that he was swallowed by a whale'.

²⁰⁵ See Attridge (1976) pp. 19-21, (1984) p. 220. See also Chapter 4 pp. 71-82 for an analysis of Josephus's historiographical style.

3.10. Josephus and conversion to Judaism

In order to assess Josephus's treatment of conversion in the Adiabene narrative, it is useful to review briefly his treatment of conversion to Judaism in his writings outside the Adiabene narrative. Cohen²⁰⁶ believes that the *Antiquities* displays a negative attitude towards conversion and adherence and believes that the absence of denial of pagan gods and exclusive loyalty to the God of Israel reveals an apologetic intent in describing these events, because of potential Roman disapproval. However, it can be seen from the above that Cohen overstates the case, in that Josephus tempers a universalistic tendency with strong programmatic statements and he is undoubtedly incorrect in relation to the Adiabene narrative (see Chapters 5 and 6). Cohen also believes that, other than the Adiabene narrative, the conversion stories all have negative overtones, either showing conversion under duress or resultant misfortune (Fulvia (18.81-4) was tricked out of her money by Jewish fraudsters, and Azizus and Polemo (20.139, 20.145-6) had unsuccessful marriages). In relation to adherence, Cohen believes that omissions by Josephus of biblical references to pagan reverence of the Jewish God when describing Pharaoh's courtiers (Exod 9:20 v. *AJ* 2.305) and omission of the veneration of God by Rahab (Josh 2:9-11 v *AJ* 5.11-12), Ruth (*AJ* 5.318-37) and the Ninevite sailors in the story of Jonah (*AJ* 9.208-214) are evidence of this. Feldman too believes that Josephus was concerned not to display too great an enthusiasm for proselytism in what he sees as a late 1c. CE situation where Jewish proselytising had caused Roman resentment, pointing to Josephus's omission of Ruth's conversion in Ruth 1.16 in favour of a somewhat anodyne narrative ultimately showing Ruth as the ancestor of King David.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ Cohen (1987) pp. 421-424.

²⁰⁷ Feldman (1991) pp. 50-52, (1998a) pp. 157-160. Scholarly opinion is summarised by Bond (2000) p. 173. Curiously, Sterling (1992) p. 306 goes so far as to assert that the *Antiquities* 'omitted mention of proselytism' as a result of, as he sees it, Roman sensitivity to Jewish missionary activity.

The approach taken by Cohen and Feldman seems to underplay other aspects of Josephus's approach to adherence and conversion. In the first instance, as Mason points out, the conversions, other than Adiabene, are merely incidental to the narrative, rather than the narrative itself.²⁰⁸ In addition, and leaving the place of the Adiabene narrative to one side, there is a substantial body of evidence of Josephus's treatment of both adherence and conversion that points in a different direction. Of adherence, surely under Feldman's premise equally worrying for Rome, there are numerous references. As well as references to sympathisers in the *Jewish War*,²⁰⁹ in the *Antiquities* itself Josephus also tells us that non-Jews came in the first century CE to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem,²¹⁰ an activity that Josephus anachronistically also places in Solomon's prayer to God, after the Temple's construction, to grant the prayers of those (non-Hebrews) who come from the ends of the earth to pray in the Temple.²¹¹ The statement regarding Solomon is apologetic, and an elaboration of *I Kgs* 8.43, where Solomon merely hopes that all the world will know God to revere (לִירְאֵה) him, but presumably reflects a situation that pertained in the first century CE. Additionally, and somewhat in contradistinction to his central premise, Cohen believes that the 'Greeks who honour our practices because they are unable to refute them' (3.217), the reverent ones from Asia and Europe who enriched the Temple with their donation (14.110) and the reference to Poppaea Sabina, Nero's wife, who was a 'pious' woman (20.195) are references to adherence.²¹²

In addition, in relation to what might be seen now as conversion, the forced transformation of the Idumaeans and Ituraeans into Judaeans is told in approving terms in the narrative,²¹³

²⁰⁸ Mason (1996) pp. 202-205.

²⁰⁹ *BJ* 2.463, *BJ* 2.560, *BJ* 7.45.

²¹⁰ *AJ* 3.318.

²¹¹ *AJ* 8.116.

²¹² Cohen (1987) p. 418-9. See Chapter 6 for further analysis.

²¹³ As noted by Mason (2003) p. 75 n. 544, albeit the approval may well be of the expansion of the state by Josephus's Hasmonaean ancestors, rather than their methods. Mason (1996) p. 203 also believes that the

and although the other examples of (would be) forced conversion, Metilius (*BJ* 2.454) and Agrippa's nobles (*Vita* 113, 149), earn Josephus's disapproval, the circumstances were different. In Metilius's case, to approve of such behaviour to a Roman would not have helped his cause, and in the *Vita*, his reason for opposing the forced circumcision of captives, that all should worship God in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience, appears to be designed to show a universalistic inclusive view.²¹⁴ Fulvia's conversion by tricksters seems likely to be not a warning against conversion but a complaint that all of Rome's Jews were punished for the misdeeds of a few rogues.²¹⁵

3.11. Josephus and circumcision

There is also a body of scholarly opinion that believes that Josephus was concerned not to make overly prominent the Jewish ritual of male circumcision, a Jewish practice generally perceived as disliked by Romans and Greeks.²¹⁶ Spilsbury in particular points to five occasions in the *Antiquities*' narrative where the biblical story has been modified to omit circumcision from the narrative.²¹⁷

- 1) 1.337-340 – the omission of the requirement of the circumcision of the Shechemites as a trick to incapacitate them (Gen 34:1-31),²¹⁸
- 2) 2.277-280 - God's intention to kill Moses because of the uncircumcision of one of his sons (Exod 4:24-26),²¹⁹

mention of the circumcision of the Persians in the story of Esther is another example of Josephus's approval of conversion.

²¹⁴ In the latter case, Josephus may not have wanted to cross swords with Agrippa, as he makes the point on more than one occasion that he wanted to be on good terms with him. See *BJ* 2.595-597 and *Vita* 126-128 regarding returning the plundered possessions of an official of the King and *Vita* 381-388 about rescuing the King's messenger from the Galileans.

²¹⁵ So Mason (1996) p. 204.

²¹⁶ For an examination of the Greek and Roman attitude to circumcision, see Chapter 7.

²¹⁷ Spilsbury (1996) p. 361.

²¹⁸ See also Feldman (1998b) p. 320 n. 32.

²¹⁹ Feldman (1998b) p. 424. Vermes (1973) p. 184 also believes this was omitted by Josephus through distaste of the subject matter.

3) 5.20-21 – the necessity to circumcise the Israelites after their wanderings in the desert (Josh 5:1-8),²²⁰

4) 6.186-187 – the omission of David’s taunt of Goliath as an uncircumcised Philistine (1 Sam 17:36), and

5) 6.203 – the substitution of six hundred Philistine heads for two hundred foreskins required of David as a dowry for Michal (1 Sam 18:27).

To this list could have been added complaints that Samson was to marry the daughter of an uncircumcised Philistine were mutated to complaints about her ‘foreign race’ (5.286 v. Judg 14:3), and there is no mention in 3.248-251 of the prohibition on slaves and strangers to eat the Passover meal unless circumcised (Exod 12:44, 48).

However, most of these omissions from or mutations of the narrative are explicable on other apologetic grounds. Tricking the Shechemites was hardly noble, Moses’s status as a paragon of virtue would have been otherwise undermined, a second circumcision for the Israelites implies lack of piety, substitution by David of Philistine heads for foreskins avoids an impression of barbarity²²¹ and circumcision of slaves and strangers at Passover would smack of exclusiveness. It is also possible that avoiding references to uncircumcised Philistines may well have been Josephus’s attempt to render the unflattering epithet into something more intelligible to a Greco-Roman audience.

In addition, Josephus is not particularly shy when describing circumcision outside the Adiabene narrative. He tells us of its fundamental importance as a commandment, originally to Abraham (1.192-193, 214), and describes its purpose as to separate Jews from others (1.192). This overt reference to exclusivity is continued in 8.262, when he argues that Herodotus’s reference to ‘the Syrians’ in Palestine as practising circumcision must be

²²⁰ Feldman (1998b) p. 445.

²²¹ Cutting off the genitals of the vanquished was not uncommon in the ancient Near East and records show that the kings of Assyria in the 7th century boasted of this, as did Pharaohs in Egypt.

a reference to the Jews, because ‘no others of the Syrians in Palestine practise circumcision beside ourselves’. The importance of circumcision is emphasised during the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, and Josephus tells the reader both about its prohibition (12.254-6)²²² and its compulsory reinstatement by Mattathias (12.278). As mentioned, it was the prerequisite of mass conversion of the Idumaeans and the Ituraeans and of would-be bridegrooms for Herodian family princesses and Josephus’s view of its centrality to observance is evidenced by his unfulfilled plans to write about it. (1.192, 1.214).²²³ Nor is he shy about the practice in the *Contra Apionem*, attempting to show that circumcision was more widely practised in the near East than solely among Jews (1.168-171, 2.141) albeit that comparing Jews with Syrians and Egyptians was unlikely to impress a Roman reader.²²⁴

3.12. Summary and conclusions

Josephus takes an ostensible position of asserting that his purpose is that of rebutting the so called calumnies against the Jews and providing the world with the benefit of an explanation of the ways of the Jewish God. In reality, both themes are part of a single broader ambition, to recover the respect that Josephus claims is now missing from non-Jews. He does this by a combination of overt proof texts (for example the favourable decrees) and by sometimes subtly, sometimes crudely, representing his history and its characters in a way that shows that the Jews, and Jewish heroes, possess admirable qualities, and that there exists a long and glorious past that sits at odds with their present

²²² Also *BJ* 1.34.

²²³ Possibly in his intended work ‘Customs and Causes’ (1.25, 4.198, 20.268).

²²⁴ For example Juvenal, who spoke of Syrians (*Satires* 3.61) and Egyptians (*Satires* 15.1-8) in less than flattering terms (albeit Gruen (2011) pp. 107-111 believes that Juvenal, even if not parodic, may not be representative of Roman late 1c. or early 2c. CE views). For further analysis of Roman views on foreigners, see Chapter 4 pp. 110-11.

difficulties. In particular, he takes almost every opportunity to represent the Jewish God as an omnipresent all-powerful entity. Perhaps the most concise summary of Josephus's theology comes from the mouth of the heathen (and therefore more 'objective') prophet Balaam.

Happy,' said he, 'is this people, to whom God grants possession of blessings untold (εὐδαίμων μυρίων) and has vouchsafed as their perpetual ally (σύμμαχον εἰς ἅπαντα) and guide His own providence (τὴν ἑαυτοῦ πρόνοιαν). For there is not a race on earth which ye shall not, through your virtue (κατ' ἀρετὴν) and your passion for pursuits most noble and pure of crime, be accounted to excel, God having regard for none among men but you and lavishing upon you the means whereby ye may become the happiest of all peoples (εὐδαιμονέστεροι) beneath the sun. (4.114)²²⁵

The categorisation of the *Antiquities* as an apologetic work has been challenged by Mason,²²⁶ who sees *implicit* (my italicisation) defence as inefficient against an express one. Instead, he focuses on Josephus's claim that he writes for those who are interested in learning more about Jews and Judaism, to encourage his friendly Roman audience toward closer association with Judaeae culture'.²²⁷ To these people, Mason believes, Josephus offers 'Judaism as an alternative political constitution and as an alternative philosophical system',²²⁸ 'an option in the philosophical/constitutional marketplace',²²⁹ serving as 'a kind of philosophical (not rhetorical) protreptic, an invitation to Judaeae philosophy'.²³⁰

The first objection to Mason's argument is that he seems reluctant to believe that Judaism was not a proselytising religion.²³¹ There are indeed others, generally those who have put forward views that Jews were active proselytisers in the period, who have seen the *Antiquities* as a missionary text, to persuade those sympathetic to Judaism to go a stage

²²⁵ Trans. Thackeray and Marcus LCL 490.

²²⁶ Mason (1998) p. 101. See also Mason (2004) pp. xxxiv-xxxvi. A view broadly accepted by Rodgers (2012) p. 452.

²²⁷ Mason (1998) p. 90.

²²⁸ Ibid p. 80. A 'primer in Judaeae law and culture for outsiders' (p. 97).

²²⁹ Ibid p. 87.

²³⁰ Ibid p. 89.

²³¹ Ibid pp. 95-6.

further.²³² The constraints of this thesis preclude an in-depth discussion of the topic but in short this view has been largely discredited since the work of Goodman, McKnight and more recently Bird.²³³ Therefore, a conclusion that proselytising as shown in the Adiabene narrative was rare would leave Josephus rather on his own as a missionary.

It is also by no means obvious that the *Antiquities* is offered as an alternative to anything or anyone. It can be seen from the above analysis that the structure of the work invites respect, where according to Josephus, it has been lacking, but nowhere does it appear to go beyond that. In particular, a concerted attempt to draw outsiders into Judaism would surely both have been structured in a more direct way and would have focused at far greater length on the customs and practices of the Jews. These are clearly of vital importance to Josephus as embodying the essence of God's commandments (obedience to which, as has been shown, is the key to God's *pronoia*). Although Josephus refers to these at various places in the *Antiquities*, he does not do so in any particularly systematic way and, on several occasions, he himself acknowledges that he has not given them sufficient space within the work.²³⁴

Ultimately, the *Antiquities* is an 'apologetic' text if, by apologetic, this means a defence of Judaism and Jews from attack. The evidence for this is both overt – Josephus says this himself - and implicit, in that a significant element of the text appears to be constructed as a series of implicit rebuttals against attack. That it was directed to those who had an interest, as Josephus himself claims, should not be surprising - to have hoped to have gained a readership from those who hated Jews would have been optimistic - and it is not unreasonable to suppose that Josephus wanted to reach the open-minded. Mason makes the

²³² Feldman (1987) p. 42, (1993) pp. 319-320, Bilde (1988) pp. 101, 103.

²³³ McKnight (1991), Goodman (1994), Bird (2010). Feldman (2003) p. 116 has, contrary to earlier views, also been persuaded that missionary activity was infrequent.

²³⁴ For a list of these, see Petersen (1958).

point that such claims of interest in an author's work were rhetorical commonplaces,²³⁵ but even commonplaces were not necessarily false.

²³⁵ Mason (2004) p. xx.

Appendix 1. Similarities between the story of Petronius and the Adiabene narrative

There is a powerful post-biblical precursor to the Adiabene narrative in Josephus's description of the Roman legate Petronius's defiance of Gaius's orders to erect his statue in the Temple (19.261-309). In equally direct manner, Josephus tells us that 'God, for his part, showed Petronius that He was with him and would lend His aid in all matters' (18.284), in that he 'straightway sent a heavy shower that was contrary to general anticipation' (18.285), whereupon 'Petronius ...was struck with great amazement when he saw unmistakeable evidence that God's providence was over the Jews and that he had shown His presence so abundantly' (18.286).²³⁶ A little later in the narrative, Josephus asserts that 'God could never have been unmindful of the risk that Petronius had taken in showing favour to the Jews and honouring God' (18.306). Note that, in both the Petronius and the Adiabene narrative, there is no apparent equivocation. We are not invited to choose between God's power and Fate and the qualificatory *οἶμαι* is nowhere to be seen. There appears to be a place in the *Antiquities* for fashionable historiographical cynicism,²³⁷ but the message in both these narratives is too substantial to be in any way watered down.

The parallel goes further. Although Petronius is not, unlike Izates, persuaded to adopt the practices of the Jews, he is impressed by the Jews' reverence for God (18.277). In terms similar to those that might have been used by an adherer to the Jewish God, he describes the Jewish God as 'sovereign of all, almighty God' (18.280), a close parallel to Izates's reply to Vologeses's messenger that God is mightier than all mankind (20.89). Petronius hopes that 'God may assist you, since he is above any human ingenuity and strength' (18.281), he saw, as mentioned above, 'unmistakeable evidence of God's providence'

²³⁶ Trans. Feldman LCL 456.

²³⁷ See Chapter 4 pp. 80-81.

(18.286), and he told Gaius in his letter to him, at least according to Josephus, that he was convinced that the Jewish God ‘had shown his power to be unimpaired and was quite unambiguous in displaying his power’ (18.288). And when the news of Gaius’s demise reached him, thus saving him from punishment for disobedience of Gaius’s orders, he ‘ marvelled at the providence of God, who swiftly and punctually had paid him his reward for showing honour to the Temple and coming to the rescue of the Jews’ (18.309),²³⁸ a theme reiterated in 19.16, when Josephus gives reasons for recounting the death of the emperor Gaius, because ‘the story provides good evidence of God’s power’.

The message in the Adiabene narrative is strikingly similar to the Petronius narrative: God is superhumanly omnipotent and will reward those who honour him, even if, at least in Petronius’s case, they are not Jews.

²³⁸ And unlike Izates, he had had no need to resort to prayer.

Chapter 4

The historiographical and historical context of the Adiabene narrative

4.1. Introduction

Before analysing the Adiabene narrative's place within the *Antiquities* and its likely effect on Josephus's readers, it is important to understand the historiographical, social, political and literary background to the work and its publication in CE 94. Firstly, what literary tradition or traditions could Josephus have been drawing upon in the writing of the *Antiquities* and the Adiabene narrative and, notwithstanding his declarations of ostensible audience, 'Greeks', are there any indications that a different or wider audience could have been envisaged? In addition, who specifically within Josephus's sphere of influence might have read the Adiabene narrative? Moving from audience to reception, how would the publication of a Jewish history at that time, particularly one that contained an overtly philo-semitic episode, the conversion of the Adiabene royal family to Judaism, and the promotion of a Parthian as its hero, be viewed? In particular, what would its reception have been in an environment where some scholars have viewed late first century CE Roman society as inherently biased against Jews as foreigners and insurrectionists and critical of any attempts by Jews to convert others to their way of life? Furthermore, against a background of Flavian use of the defeat of Judaeans insurrection as legitimising their rule, how dangerous would it have been to have published a work lauding those very insurrectionists, their God and culture during the Principate of Domitian, an Emperor who appears to have been dangerously disapproving of any views that ran counter to his own? In addition, why would a Parthian hero appeal to a society that appears to have been naturally antipathetic to barbarians generally, but particularly Parthians, who had had military success against Rome? This chapter examines each of these questions in turn.

4.2. Josephus, historiographical tradition and audience

Josephus is relatively specific about his declared audience; it is ‘Greeks’. He states at the beginning of his Proem that he has undertaken his history ‘in the belief that the whole Greek speaking world (τοῖς Ἑλλησιν) will find it worthy of attention’ (1.5) and he muses whether ‘our ancestors were willing to communicate such information and whether any of the Greeks (τῶν Ἑλλήνων) had been curious to learn our history’ (1.9). He also asserts in the conclusion to the work that no one other than him could have produced ‘so accurate a treatise as this for the Greek (speaking) world (εἰς Ἑλληνας)’ (20.262). It therefore seems reasonably clear that he means an educated Greek-reading audience, rather than Greeks in the narrow ethnic sense, and the identity of Ἑλληνες should be contrasted with those who are not Ἑλληνες, namely barbarians (Βάρβαροι).²³⁹ It is also noticeable that, throughout the work, other cross-cultural references are present that either specifically refer to readers in a culturally Hellenistic world or imply this.²⁴⁰ Hebrew names have inevitably been Hellenised,²⁴¹ the Hebrew Bible is referred to as ‘our Law and the political constitution (ἡ πολιτεία) based thereon’²⁴² and months,²⁴³ coins²⁴⁴ and weights and measures²⁴⁵ are presented in both the original Hebrew and their Greek (or Roman) equivalent.²⁴⁶

Josephus was not the first Jewish author to write a history of the Jews in Greek. He himself appears to accept this fact when he wrote in the *Jewish War* that ‘many Jews before me have accurately recorded the history of our ancestors and that these records have been translated by certain Greeks in their native tongue without serious error’.²⁴⁷ The conclusion

²³⁹ See Josephus’s contrast between the two in *BJ* 5.17, *AJ* 1.107, 4.12, 8.284, 11.299, 16.176, 18.20.

²⁴⁰ For example 1.73, 3.139, 3.179-187, 8.133, 15.331-341.

²⁴¹ 1.122-9, 2.247.

²⁴² 1.10. See also 1.5, 3.84, 3.322 and Mason (2012) pp. 138-9.

²⁴³ E.g. 3.239, 3.248, 8.100, 12.319, 12.412.

²⁴⁴ E.g. 3.195, 15.314, 18.312 (Temple tax, but only in a Greek equivalent).

²⁴⁵ E.g. 3.142, 3.144, 9.85, 14.106.

²⁴⁶ For a longer list of examples, see Sterling (1992) p. 298.

²⁴⁷ *BJ* 1.17.

appears to have been an inconvenient one, as it would have negated any great purpose in writing the *Antiquities*, so that by the time of publication of the *Antiquities*, this position had mutated to one that proposed that many had attempted to combine the knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures with a knowledge of Greek, but only two or three have succeeded.²⁴⁸ He appears to name these in *Contra Apionem*,²⁴⁹ where he recognises the epic poet Philo and the author Eupolemus as having written on the Bible, if not as accurately as him.²⁵⁰ There were others whom he does not mention either in the *Antiquities* or *Contra Apionem*, including Artapanus, Demetrius the Chronographer, Aristeeas, the author of 2 Maccabees and those more controversially identified as Jewish,²⁵¹ as well as Josephus's *bête noir* Justus, most notably historian of more recent history.

It is difficult to decide how much he saw himself in this genre as there is insufficient material left to form much of a judgement. Ostensibly, his target audience of 'Greeks' does not appear to be the same as his Jewish historian predecessors, who seemed to be targeting a Jewish Greek-speaking audience.²⁵² However, it is possible that Josephus assumed from their use of Greek that their target audience was the same as his, and some of their techniques, particularly of emphasising the Hellenistic qualities of Jewish biblical heroes, would have resonated with him.

²⁴⁸ *AJ* 20.265. A slightly different explanation is given in *AJ* 1.6-7, namely that Josephus originally decided against attempting a history of the Jews because the ambit was too great.

²⁴⁹ *C. Ap* 1.218.

²⁵⁰ It is not wholly clear from the text whether Josephus recognises these as Jewish. He also refers in the same paragraph to Demetrius Phalereus, the supposed instigator of the Septuagint, and not Jewish, possibly confusing him with Demetrius the Chronographer. Sterling (1992) p. 264 believes that Josephus may have only known these authors through the work of Alexander Polyhistor. Additionally, Josephus refers to Cleodemus Malchus (1.240), but without indicating his ethnicity, which may have been Jewish (see Schürer (1986) vol. III pp. 526-528).

²⁵¹ The literature is voluminous, but the consensus appears to be that these authors wrote for a Hellenistic Jewish audience. See e.g. Collins (2000) pp. 29-63, Gruen (1998) pp. 110-188, Nickelsburg (2005). Doran (1987) sees parallels between these historians and Josephus, as does Holladay (1983-96, Vol. 1 p. 2). Sterling (2007) attempts to divide ancient histories written by Jews into Histories and Historical Novels (a genre in its own right championed by Wills (1995)).

²⁵² Sterling (1992) pp. 222-5. He believes (pp. 19, 308) these authors wrote to give Jews comfort in a hostile world. See also Schürer (1973-86) vol. III p. 594 and Goodman (1999) p. 55.

It is nonetheless possible that a Hellenised Jewish readership for Josephus could have existed which was interested in reading a paraphrase of the Bible,²⁵³ as presumably existed for other Jewish historians who wrote in Greek, but there are fundamental differences between Josephus and these other Jewish historians. These others are presumed to have had a localised Jewish readership in their own community. Josephus probably did not, in as much as he was living in Rome, and there is no evidence of either a flourishing literate Hellenistic Jewish community in Rome, or indeed Josephus's interest in the Jewish Roman community, Hellenistic or otherwise.²⁵⁴ Josephus has no recorded connection with Alexandria, the most Hellenistic of Jewish populations, other than a very brief stay there, while accompanying Titus from Judaea to Rome.²⁵⁵

Notwithstanding the distinction between Josephus and other Jewish historians, it has often been speculated as to whether Josephus also expected a Jewish readership for his history, and as noted by Mason, based on the original work of Tcherikover, 'many apologetic texts with formal addresses to outsiders expected an intramural readership'.²⁵⁶ In addition, there is a single direct reference to Jewish readership in 4.197 where, in excusing his reordering of the Bible on the grounds of simplifying the taxonomy of the Laws, Josephus explains that 'I have thought it necessary to make this preliminary observation, lest perchance any of my countrymen who read this work should reproach me at all for having gone astray'.²⁵⁷ This phrase has persuaded some scholars of an intended Jewish audience,²⁵⁸ albeit it is possible that Josephus constructed a fictitious Jewish readership in order to convince his hoped-for non-Jewish readers of his own status within the community.

²⁵³ Rajak (2002) p. 225 assumes this, along with a Greco-Roman audience.

²⁵⁴ For further analysis of Josephus's relationship with the Jews of Rome, see below (pp. 86-88).

²⁵⁵ *BJ* 7.116-8, *Vita* 422. Sevenster (1968) pp. 176-191 argues that many Palestinian Jews could read Greek.

²⁵⁶ Mason (2004) p. xix, Tcherikover (1956).

²⁵⁷ Trans. Thackeray & Marcus, LCL 490.

²⁵⁸ C.f. Spilsbury (1998) p. 21 and see also (2001-4) p. 246 and p. 251.

There are also a number of possible indirect references. Josephus says in 10.210, after partly retelling Daniel's 'elements' dream, that those who would wish to learn more about Daniel's prophecy 'should take the trouble to read the book of Daniel', which Feldman sees as a clue that Jews, as the only audience able to take up Josephus's suggestion, are also an intended audience.²⁵⁹ There is a plea (16.174-9) that the history is designed 'to remove the causes for hatred which have taken root in thoughtless persons among us as among them', which would ostensibly imply some Jewish readers in order to be effective, and there is a mysterious appeal (19.15-16) to 'those in unhappy circumstances' to take comfort from the story of Gaius. There are also passages which could be seen as deliberately ambiguous statements promising Jews salvation from their then current difficulties, albeit they could equally well be merely expressions of Josephus's own optimistic beliefs.²⁶⁰ However, there are a multitude of references that explain Jewish religion and custom and Jewish biblical figures,²⁶¹ an odd endeavour if a material Jewish audience is anticipated, but much more explicable if a non-Jewish one is being addressed.²⁶² However, that some Jews also familiar with the Greek language might read the work should not be discounted²⁶³ (as for example Agrippa II had read, so Josephus claims, the *Jewish War*).²⁶⁴

It has also been suggested that Josephus falls within the historiographical genre of oriental ethnographers. Albeit his later work *Contra Apionem* specifically aligns Josephus's claim

²⁵⁹ Feldman (1998b) p. 49-50.

²⁶⁰ 4.112-117 (Balaam's prophecy), 4.127 (ultimate triumph of the Jews), 4.312-4 (Moses's prophecy of redemption), 5.94 (Joshua's reminder of God's land covenant), 10.205-10 (Daniel's dream of empires), 15.133 (Herod's reminder to his troops of their right to the land). See Feldman (1998b) p. 153, (1998a) pp. 543-4 regarding Daniel's dream. See also Spilisbury (2003) pp. 15-20.

²⁶¹ Mason (2005) p. 271 gives examples of the introductions to Biblical heroes.

²⁶² Passover (2.317, 3.248-9, 17.213, 18.29, 20.106), Shevuot (3.252, 17.254), Hanukkah (12.412), Sukkot (15.50), Sabbath (3.143), Levites (20.216), mourning period (17.200), the name Judaea (11.173), High Priests (20.226), name of God (2.276), prohibition on images (18.55).

²⁶³ A position taken by Goodman (1999) p. 50.

²⁶⁴ *Vita* 362, 364-7.

for accuracy with other oriental ‘records’,²⁶⁵ this support of and identification with oriental writers and writing is seen perhaps more subtly in the *Antiquities*. In Josephus’s first 11 books, there are 36 references to other ancient authors’ works in support of the veracity of the narrative,²⁶⁶ of which six,²⁶⁷ the greatest number of references to a single author, are to Berossus, a 3rd c. BCE Babylonian historian who, like Josephus was a priest and presented a history of his people from the dawn of humanity to his own time. It is also interesting that Manetho (3rd c. BCE), similarly a priest, wrote a history of his own people from the earliest times. He is quoted once in the *Antiquities* (1.107), and is extensively quoted in *Contra Apionem*.²⁶⁸ For Sterling, these two oriental ethnographers were the first so-called ‘apologetic historiographers’, taking advantage of a Hellenistic historiographical fascination with the orient and oriental peoples, to present their own competitive history to a Hellenistic audience, and in whose tradition Josephus writes.²⁶⁹ However, from the little we know, all Sterling’s examples appear to have intended a limited localised primary audience and therefore to claim that Manetho and Berossus (and therefore Josephus) were part of a tradition stretching back to Hecataeus and Megasthenes (Greeks writing about barbarians for Greeks)²⁷⁰ seems to be overstating the case for a continuous tradition recognised by Josephus.

In fact, whatever similarity of subject matter Josephus had with his Jewish predecessors, and whatever similarity of pride in his own *ethnos* he had with other Orientals, it would

²⁶⁵ *C. Ap.* 1.10, 1.28-29, 1.30-36. Rajak (1982) p. 472 makes the point that the repetition of *record*, as opposed to facts or legends, was a claim made by oriental historiographers rather than Hellenistic ones.

²⁶⁶ For a list, see Moehring (1957) pp. 16-18. In addition 8.60 (Herodotus).

²⁶⁷ 1.93, 1.107, 1.158, 10.20, 10.34, 10.219.

²⁶⁸ *C. Ap.* 1.73-105, 1.227-287, 294-6, 2.1, 16. Rajak (2002) pp. 225-6 also sees an oriental influence on Josephus.

²⁶⁹ (1992) pp. 103-136, also Rodgers (2012) pp. 449-50, 452. Josephus names 19 such authors in the *Antiquities* alone. In particular, Sterling (2007) points to the competitive nature of ethnic antiquity, and the origins of culture in which Josephus, implicitly in the *Antiquities* and expressly in the *Contra Apionem* (1.1-5), participates, along with Demetrius, Eupolemus and Artabanus along with others.

²⁷⁰ Sterling (1992) p. 245.

appear that Josephus himself seeks to place his work firmly in the tradition of Greek, and to a lesser extent, Roman historiographers. Much has been written on Josephus's structure and linguistic style and his debt in this respect to Greco-Roman historians.²⁷¹ Contrary to Thackeray,²⁷² whose view that much of Josephus's work can be attributed to assistants has now largely been discredited since the work of Shutt,²⁷³ the consensus view now appears to be that the considerable echoes of Hellenistic authors found in the *Antiquities* may be either conscious or unconscious, taken directly or repeating common usage, but can be ascribed, rather than to others, to Josephus himself who, as he says, worked hard to master a foreign language.²⁷⁴ Stylistically, it seems certain that Josephus wanted to present the *Jewish Antiquities* in a way that would directly appeal to a Greco-Roman audience, through a number of approaches to the writing of history that such an audience would recognise as firmly planted in the Greco-Roman tradition, notably by claiming authority, completeness, accuracy and veracity, the greatness of his subject matter and professional scepticism. These are examined in turn.

For the writer of contemporary, as opposed to ancient history, the standard claim to authority was to have been present and to have relied on first-hand hearsay, often referred to as autopsy and enquiry,²⁷⁵ a claim made with some force by Josephus in relation to his narration of the Jewish War.²⁷⁶ Such claims were not of course logical for the *Antiquities*,²⁷⁷ but other well-trodden paths were available. Particularly for Romans, one's lineage was all

²⁷¹ See Shutt (1961) pp. 59-109. Also Ladouceur (1983, pp. 25, 33-38) and Cohen (1982) p. 368. Feldman (1998b) pp. 3-7 sees Josephus also as an inheritor of the rhetorical traditions of Isocrates and Aristotle. He also sees influence of the Greek tragedians (1998c).

²⁷² (1929) pp. 56-58, LCL 242 (Cloth edition) pp. xiv-xvii.

²⁷³ (1961) pp. 59-75. See also Feldman (1999) pp. 910-911 and Rajak (2002) pp. 63, 233-36.

²⁷⁴ 1.7-8, 20.263. Rajak (2002) pp. 47-8 points out that these statements could be tropes, but also believes that they are likely to be true.

²⁷⁵ Marincola (1997) p. 80 n. 83 for a list of authors and such claims.

²⁷⁶ *BJ* 1.3, 1.18, 1.22, *C. Ap.* 1.55-6, *Vita* 357-8.

²⁷⁷ However, Josephus tries hard to combine the two genres by claiming that his autopsy and enquiry in the *Jewish War* make his recitation of the Jews' history in the *Antiquities* truthful (*C. Ap.* 1.53-56).

important to assess the character of the writer and therefore their authority. Pompeius Trogus (1c. BCE), Velleius (1c. CE) and Arrian (2c. CE) all made claims to exalted lineage.²⁷⁸ So did Josephus, primarily in his autobiography the *Vita*,²⁷⁹ which appears to have been written as an integral part of the *Antiquities*,²⁸⁰ and the first six paragraphs of the *Vita* extol his exalted lineage from Hasmonaean royalty and former High Priests. He also puts himself forward, particularly in his *Vita*, as a man of affairs,²⁸¹ a quality thought important for the historian by Polybius.²⁸²

Completeness, accuracy and veracity were also one of the means whereby ancient historians justified their own efforts and, as Marincola points out, ‘if the historian were only a recorder of tradition, there would be little need for him and his history’.²⁸³ Thucydides, Polybius, Dionysius and Tacitus all made such claims.²⁸⁴ Josephus is no exception and he makes the claim in a variety of ways.

In respect of completeness, Josephus suggests somewhat disingenuously that Ptolemy Philadelphus did not get the complete edition of sacred writings.²⁸⁵ In addition, there is the claim in 10.218 that, in translating (μεταφράζειν) from the Hebrew to Greek, Josephus has reported their contents ‘without adding anything of my own to the narrative or omitting anything therefrom’.²⁸⁶ As can be seen from the extensive number of Josephus’s additions to and omissions from the biblical text²⁸⁷ (assuming that the texts we now have are broadly

²⁷⁸ Marincola (1997) pp. 141-2, 146.

²⁷⁹ From which he claims others can judge his character (and hence veracity) (*Vita* 430), a course warned against by Polybius (3.9.1-5).

²⁸⁰ 20. 266.

²⁸¹ See for example *Vita* 13-16 concerning his mission to Rome.

²⁸² Polyb. 3.4.13, 12.28.1-5.

²⁸³ (1997) p. 115.

²⁸⁴ Thuc. 1.97.2, Polyb. 3.47.6-3.48.12, Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.4.2, Tac. *Ann.* 3.16.1, 4.53.2. And see Marincola (1997) pp. 113-7.

²⁸⁵ 1.12, See also 20.260, *C. Ap.* 1.47.

²⁸⁶ See also 1.17, 4.196, 8.56, 14.1 and *C. Ap.* 1.42.

²⁸⁷ See Chapter 3 for examples.

similar to Josephus's own, as outlined in *Contra Apionem* 1.38-9),²⁸⁸ this claim would seem to be stretching the truth. Various explanations have been put forward for this statement.²⁸⁹

The most obvious is a simple one, namely that this is a protestation of impartiality used by Hellenistic historians, with whom Josephus wished to be associated.²⁹⁰

In respect of accuracy, Josephus claims accuracy by three means. Firstly, by reference to the sacred books. His concluding paragraphs repeat the assertion of accuracy and state modestly that his superior knowledge (a function of his own brilliance and his priestly status) equips him for such accuracy.²⁹¹ In this claim, Josephus carries on a tradition whereby reference to records was a standard technique of Hellenistic historians.²⁹² In particular, and critically, it can be demonstrated that he uses his standing as a priest and claimed knowledge of the scriptures to impart accuracy to the entire work, rather than just the scriptural paraphrase.²⁹³ He also claims accuracy by reference to physical proof, such as the bronze pillars and tablets on which decrees favourable to the Jews are recorded (14.266, 16.48), writing in the Temple which corroborates his narrative,²⁹⁴ Tyrian archives (8.55), or Pompey's gift from the Jews (14.36). In particular, physical reminders (or the existence of place names or songs or customs) give credence to Josephus, because they exist 'to this day' (ἄχρι/μέχρι δεῦρο, ἔτι/μέχρι νῦν).²⁹⁵ In this respect, he follows a Hellenistic tradition dating back to Herodotus, and utilised by Polybius and Dionysius.²⁹⁶

²⁸⁸ See Feldman (1988). See also Tuval (2013) pp. 129-130 and the literature cited there.

²⁸⁹ See Feldman (1988) pp. 466-470, (1998b) pp. 37-46 and (2004) p. 3 n. 4, Cohen (1979) pp. 24-29, Sterling (1992) pp. 252-256, Bilde (1988) pp. 95-7, Attridge (1976) pp. 58-60, Moehring (1957) pp. 33-4. Inowlocki (2005) pp. 50-51 summarises the various arguments.

²⁹⁰ See Marincola (1997) pp. 158-74 and *BJ* 1.1-2, 5.20.

²⁹¹ 20.261-66. See also 1.26, and *C. Ap.* 1.54. Attridge (1976) p. 16 sees the claim as important in establishing authority. Marincola (1997) pp. 109-112 gives other examples of priests as Hellenistic historians claiming special authority. Rajak (2002) pp. 18-20 discusses Josephus's use of his priestly status both as a badge of status and of learning.

²⁹² Marincola (1997) p. 103.

²⁹³ 1.5, 1.17, 20.264.

²⁹⁴ 3.38, 4.303, 5.61.

²⁹⁵ 1.71, 1.92, 1.203, 1.212, 3.31, 5.119, 5.125, 5.303, 8.46, 8.55, 8.154, 8.174, 9.93, 10.78, 10.264, 10.265, 11.292, 12.325, 14.265.

²⁹⁶ For examples, see Marincola (1997) pp. 101-103.

Lastly he claims accuracy by repeated reference to other Hellenistic historians whose narratives agree with his,²⁹⁷ not only using these as proof texts of his own accuracy but also, in Barclay's words, 'as a sign of Josephus's desire and his ability to join the mainstream cultural tradition in Rome'.²⁹⁸ His view on corroborative historiography is contained in *Contra Apionem* 1.25-6: 'The proof of historical veracity is universal agreement in the description, oral or written, of the same events' and Josephus liberally sprinkles his text with such corroboration.²⁹⁹

In respect of veracity, he sets out his stall in 8.56, claiming

I wish my readers to know that we have said nothing more than what is true, and have not, by inserting into the history various plausible and seductive passages meant to deceive and entertain, attempted to evade critical enquiry.³⁰⁰

Josephus also makes the claim of holding veracity to be more important than charm of exposition in 14.1-3³⁰¹ and throughout the work, the claim of veracity is then repeated.³⁰²

Asserting the greatness of the subject matter was also a frequent device of ancient Greek and Roman historians, irrespective of the truth of the statement, in order to obtain the reader's attention. Herodotus claims that Xerxes's expedition was the greatest known,³⁰³ Thucydides makes a similar claim both about the Peloponnesian War itself³⁰⁴ but also, like Herodotus, about individual events within it. Many others followed, including Livy,

²⁹⁷ See p. 75 note 266 and, post-biblically, Agatharchides, Hecataeus, Theopompus, Polybius (x2), Strabo (x8), Timagenes (x2), Nicolaus (x2).

²⁹⁸ Barclay (2005).

²⁹⁹ For example, Noah's Ark (1.93), the Tower of Babel (1.118-9), Abraham (1.158), Abraham's descendants (1.240), David (7.101), Solomon and Hiram (8.144, 147-9), Rehoboam (8.260), Elijah and the drought (8.324), King of Assyria (9.283), Sennacherib (10.18-20), the capture of Jerusalem (12.5), Antiochus III (12.135), Aristobulus (13.319), Alexander Jannaeus (13.343, 347), Pompey (14.68), Jews of Cyrene (14.114), Hyrcanus (14.138), Antigonos (15.9), David's tomb (16.183). See Marincola (1997) p. 282 for examples of other authors using the technique.

³⁰⁰ Trans. Marcus LCL 281. Similarly *BJ* 1.1-8 where Josephus claims that he was constrained to write the *Jewish War* to refute those who were doing outrage to the truth.

³⁰¹ A theme begun in the *Jewish War* (see *BJ* 1.16).

³⁰² 2.347, 4.196, 9.208, 16.187, 19.15, 20.157.

³⁰³ 7.20-21.

³⁰⁴ 1.1.

Diodorus and Dionysius.³⁰⁵ Josephus also makes frequent reference to the greatness of the subject matter. The *Jewish War* gave him an obvious opportunity to emulate Thucydides and Herodotus, and Josephus introduces his work with the statement that the Jewish War was the greatest of wars of all time.³⁰⁶ Such a sweeping generalisation was not possible in the *Antiquities*, so instead he populates his work with frequent assertions of the greatness of the event. The drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea was the greatest punishment there has ever been (2.346), Korah's conflagration was the greatest fire ever seen (4.55), Abijah's victory over Jeroboam produced the greatest slaughter ever seen (8.284), the High Priest Jochanan's murder of his brother Jeshua the most impious deed ever committed by Greek or barbarian (11.299). Post-biblically, Herod's sons had committed the greatest crimes known to mankind against him (16.99), the destruction of the Jewish community in Parthia was the greatest disaster and massacre in history (18.310) and the madness of the Emperor Gaius infected the Empire with the worst ills in history (19.1).

Josephus worked hard to prove the Jews' antiquity.³⁰⁷ At the same time, he is acutely conscious of a common dichotomy among classical historians of the distant past, namely that such history inevitably entailed a telling of extraordinary events of the distant past which, to a sceptical readership, would detract from the credibility of such claims. Authors approached the problem in different ways: attribution of myth to others without endorsement, rationalisation, or an appeal to the reader to make their own mind up on the matter.³⁰⁸ Josephus makes use of all three techniques, particularly the last. His stock phrase is that on the event (either mythical or bizarre) in question everyone is welcome to their own opinion,³⁰⁹ a trope which, according to Thackeray, had previously been used by

³⁰⁵ For references, see Marincola (1997) p. 34-43.

³⁰⁶ *BJ* 1.1.

³⁰⁷ See Chapter 3 p. 44 for an examination of the theme.

³⁰⁸ For example Livy *praef.* 6.

³⁰⁹ 1.108, 2.348, 3.81, 3.266-8, 3.322, 4.158, 8.262, 10.281, 12.359, 17.354, 19.108.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and by the 2nd century CE was a stock formula according to Lucian.³¹⁰ In addition, Josephus can remind a Greek audience that other similar marvels, for example Alexander's crossing of the Pamphylian Sea bed, were accepted by Hellenistic historians.³¹¹ There is also a more subtle appeal to the Hellenistic rationalist reader. As has been discussed in Chapter 3, Josephus offers clear programmatic statements regarding God's direction of human affairs and the role of τύχη, or Fate, is subordinated to God's will. In a few instances, however, he appears to cast doubt on the universality of this doctrine, not because of any wavering of belief, but as a stylistic flourish in the Hellenistic manner.

So far, it seems from the evidence that taking Josephus's own statements that he was reaching out to 'Greeks', interpreting this as meaning 'Greek speakers', seems to be borne out from an analysis of Josephus's linguistic style. Is it possible to narrow this down and can we deduce that a specifically Greek speaking and reading Roman audience was intended? There is no ostensible appeal to a specifically Roman audience (as there was in the *Jewish War*)³¹² but it is not illogical to believe that Josephus might have hoped his readership to have included such people³¹³ and the frequent references in the *Antiquities* and *Vita* to the *Jewish War* might lead one to suppose a common readership between the two works.³¹⁴ Josephus also claims continuing support from the Flavians, in the form of Domitian and Domitia, in his contemporaneously published autobiography,³¹⁵ and it is

³¹⁰ Thackeray LCL 242 pp. 52-53 note b, (1929) p. 58. See also Attridge (1976) pp. 18-19, (1984) p. 220 and Feldman (1991) p. 49 and references there. Feldman also notes its use by Pliny, but believes there might have been two audiences, one sceptical, one seeing history as 'a series of divine acts intended to teach morality to the reader'.

³¹¹ 2.347-8. Other phrases used include 'however incredible this may seem' (15.379).

³¹² *BJ* 1.6, 1.16.

³¹³ Moehring (1984) p. 868 believes that Romans are the principal audience, and that Josephus's mission is to distinguish between Diasporan Jews, who took no part in the revolt, and those in Judaea, who did. However, there is little if anything in the text to support this view. Bilde (1988) p. 103 sees the *Antiquities* as possibly addressed to 'the government'.

³¹⁴ 1.4, 1.203, 12.244, 13.72, 13.173, 13.298, 18.11, 20.258-9, *Vita* 10, 27, 413. See also Mason (1998) p. 68, (2005) p. 271.

³¹⁵ *Vita* 429, perhaps similar to Vespasian and Titus who, even if they were not patrons as such, apparently expressed a keen interest in the *Jewish War* (*Vita* 361-3).

possible that he hoped they, and their immediate circle, would read his work, albeit it is noticeable that his patron for the *Antiquities* is the commoner Epaphroditus.³¹⁶ There are also cultural references that could imply a Roman readership³¹⁷ and citing numerous Roman decrees in favour of the Jews might be also be evidence of an intended Roman audience.³¹⁸ In addition, it might also be believed that some of the overtly flattering references to Rome that punctuate the latter half of the *Antiquities*, specifically its fairness and generosity, creation of happiness, prosperity and peace for all and its tolerance of others' beliefs, could have been intended for Roman readers.³¹⁹ Moreover, the claim in 16.174

Now it was necessary for me to cite these decrees since this account of our history is chiefly meant to reach the Greeks in order to show them that in former times we were treated with all respect.³²⁰

shows in the word *chiefly* (τὸ πλέον) that ethnic 'Greeks' can't have been the only target, and that at least some Romans may have fallen into this category as well, as perhaps indicated by his complaint of the Jews' harsh treatment by the Romans in 20.260.³²¹

4.3. Who might have read the Adiabene narrative?

In first century CE Rome, the principal means for any author to disseminate his work would have been among a circle, or circles, of sophisticated educated people known to the author, who would have acted both as quasi-editor, giving feedback to the author on the draft either heard or read, and thereafter acting as a means of promotion of the work, by allowing their copy to be copied by other interested parties.³²² Who could these people have been to act as conduit for Josephus to reach his intended audience?

³¹⁶ See below for views on Josephus's circle.

³¹⁷ Dates after the rise of Rome are often presented by both Olympiad and name of consul (e.g. 14.4, 14.66).

³¹⁸ See Chapter 3 p. 43.

³¹⁹ For example 12.1212 14.247, 16.36, 16.41.

³²⁰ Trans. Marcus LCL 410.

³²¹ See also for example 17.28 (harsh Roman taxation) and 17.264 (sacking of the Temple by Roman troops).

³²² See Starr (1987), White (1978), Fantham (1999) pp. 1-19 and Price (2005).

The starting point must be Josephus's declared patron, Epaphroditus, to whom the *Antiquities*, as well as the *Vita* and *Contra Apion*, was dedicated.³²³ Concerning the identity of Epaphroditus, nothing certain is known. Scholarly opinion appears to favour either Nero's former secretary, executed by Domitian probably in 95 CE, or M. Mettius Epaphroditus, a Greek who lived in Rome and apparently had a large personal library.³²⁴ He is described by Josephus as 'a man devoted to every form of learning',³²⁵ an undoubted trope, but also as someone through whom Josephus hoped to reach a wider audience.³²⁶

It is clear that, in the case of the *Jewish War*, Josephus had imperial support, if not patronage and, as has been mentioned, he presented the work to the Flavian emperors Vespasian and Titus. However, Josephus's words should be compared with those in the preface to the Elder Pliny's *Natural History*, which contains a lengthy dedication to Titus.³²⁷ Yavetz doubts whether Titus was close to Josephus, and presumes that he was 'a member of the lower entourage'.³²⁸ He was however part of the social circle of Agrippa II and his sister Berenice. In addition to the assertion in *Vita* 362, previously mentioned, that he presented the work to 'many others, some of whom has taken part in the war, such as King Agrippa, and certain of his relatives', his distribution channels are further remarked upon in *Contra Apionem*. He repeats that he presented his volumes to Vespasian and Titus, and 'to many Romans who had taken part in the campaign. Others I sold to a large number of my compatriots, persons well versed in Greek learning,³²⁹ among whom were Julius Archelaus, the most venerable Herod, and the most admirable King Agrippa himself'.³³⁰ Julius

³²³ *AJ* 1.8, *Vita* 430, *C. Ap.* 1.1, 2.1, 2.296.

³²⁴ See Mason (2004) pp. xviii-xix, Cotton & Eck (2005) pp. 49-52.

³²⁵ *AJ* 1.8.

³²⁶ *C. Ap.* 2.296. White (1978) p. 85 sees that 'publicity may have been in fact the most solid of their [wealthy men's] services to literary men'.

³²⁷ In this respect, Bowersock's comment that Josephus was 'a cosseted protégé of the imperial government' seems wide of the mark (Bowersock (2005) p. 53).

³²⁸ Yavetz (1975) p. 431. See also Price (2005) p. 106 and Mason (2003) p. 168-9 nn. 1742-1744.

³²⁹ Agrippa was, according to Josephus, 'thoroughly conversant with Hellenic culture' (*Vita* 359).

³³⁰ *C. Ap.* 1.50-51.

Archelaus of Commagene was at one time married to Agrippa II's sister Mariamme³³¹ and King Antiochus of Commagene was also in Rome in the 70s, together with his two sons, Epiphanes and Callinicus.³³² Agrippa and Mariamme's sister Drusilla had at one time been promised in marriage to Epiphanes.³³³ The evidence here is of a closely knit group of Judeans and Commagenians, particularly as Josephus refers to Archelaus as one of a group of his compatriots (τῶν ἡμετέρων), not strictly true but presumably put this way because the grouping was perceived as indistinguishable.

We do not know where Agrippa was for the remainder of his life. Berenice had been sent away from Rome around 80 CE and Agrippa had probably died by 93/4, the date of the *Antiquities*' publication.³³⁴ However, there is no evidence that the Commagenians ever left Rome and there is in any event likely to have been a broader group of Hellenised Jewish nobles with whom Josephus could have remained in contact, either in Rome or Palestine. In this respect, Mason points out that frequent references to the *Jewish War* in the *Antiquities* could presuppose a continuity of readership.³³⁵ Mention should also be made of another possible contact and channel for distribution, Tiberius Julius Alexander, nephew of Philo and one of Titus's commanders in the siege of Jerusalem. Described by Josephus as an apostate,³³⁶ he appears to have been commander of the Praetorian Guard in Rome,³³⁷ and connected to Berenice and Agrippa because Berenice had formerly been married to his brother, Marcus Julius Alexander.³³⁸ Josephus would undoubtedly have known him at the siege of Jerusalem and may well have encountered him in Rome.

³³¹ 19.355, 20.140.

³³² *BJ* 7.243.

³³³ 19.355. Herod is unknown.

³³⁴ 20.267. For the dating of the death of Agrippa II, see Cohen (1979) pp. 170-180.

³³⁵ *AJ* 1.4, 1.7, 203, 13.72, 298, 18.11, 20.259, *Vita* 413. Mason (2004) p. xviii.

³³⁶ 20.100.

³³⁷ Turner (1954) p. 61.

³³⁸ 19.276.

Other than Tiberius Julius Alexander, who else could the Romans have been who had taken part with him in the campaign, to whom he presented copies of the *Jewish War* and with whom he might have remained in contact? Cotton and Eck examine at length Josephus's likely Roman military contacts, both those present at Titus's war council in 70 CE (*BJ* 6.236-7) and others, including M. Ulpius Traianus, father of the future emperor, whom he is likely to have met in Judaea.³³⁹ They are, however, doubtful, that he would have retained contact, largely because these people are not mentioned by Josephus, albeit they postulate that T. Flavius Clemens and his wife, often seen by scholars as sympathetic to Judaism on the basis of Cassius Dio's narrative (67.14.1-2), could have been a recipient.³⁴⁰ Mason, conversely, believes that transmission of the *Jewish War* could have been to some of the senior military commanders he had met.³⁴¹ Whether these people, even if they were recipients of the *Jewish War*, remained in contact with Josephus over the years is open to doubt.

Whatever Josephus's relationship with Vespasian and Titus, this does not appear to have continued with Domitian, albeit Josephus claims that Domitian took an interest in him and gave him further honours, as did Domitia.³⁴² In addition, Josephus claims that Domitian protected him from unnamed Jewish accusers, often the role of a patron, or *amicus*.³⁴³ However, it is notable that Josephus did not dedicate the *Antiquities* and *Vita* to Domitian. In terms of other powerful or influential Romans of the senatorial and equestrian class with whom Josephus could have been familiar, we know nothing. Although he was a Roman citizen and spoke of himself as having such privileges given to him by Vespasian

³³⁹ Cotton and Eck (2005).

³⁴⁰ *Ibid* p. 43. But see later in this chapter (pp. 95-6) for discussion of Cassius Dio's text and Flavius Clemens's sympathies.

³⁴¹ Mason (2005a) p. 87.

³⁴² *Vita* 429.

³⁴³ White (1978) p. 85.

(principally a house and stipend) so as to generate envy,³⁴⁴ he was not, as Mason notes, an *eques*, even though, before the Jewish War, a number of Jews in Judaea were.³⁴⁵ The only contact in Italy that we know of, other than those already mentioned, is a Jewish actor, Aliturus, through whom he was introduced to Nero's wife Poppaea in 64 CE,³⁴⁶ who was unlikely, even if still alive in 93/4, to have been useful in disseminating his history.

Unlike his Greco-Roman historiographical émigré predecessors such as Strabo from Pontus and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Josephus does not seem to have been part of a literary scene. He is mentioned in passing by Suetonius and Cassius Dio (the latter more than one hundred years later)³⁴⁷ but only in relation to his prediction of Vespasian's rise to power, rather than his role in the war or later literary efforts. Although somewhat later, Eusebius claims that a statue of Josephus was erected and his works placed in the public library, albeit when this took place we do not know.³⁴⁸ Surely, had Josephus known others, particularly those who were part of a literary social circle, he would have mentioned them and they him, as Pliny, Tacitus, Silius Italicus, Dio Chrysostom, Quintilian and others did about each other.

Even if no readily apparent Greco-Roman literary circle presents itself, from his plea that the *Antiquities* will help to 'reconcile the other nations to us and to remove the causes for hatred which have taken root in thoughtless person among us as well as among them' (*AJ* 16.175), it might be thought that Josephus could have envisaged a ready Jewish audience. Could one have existed within the indigenous Jewish community in Rome? Josephus does

³⁴⁴ *Vita* 423.

³⁴⁵ Mason (2003) pp. 168-9 nn. 1742-4, *BJ* 2.308. As Goodman (1994a) p. 337 points out, Josephus's children would not have been citizens, as his wives were unlikely to have been Roman citizens and he himself does not appear to have been granted *conubium* with foreign wives, an honour he surely would have recorded.

³⁴⁶ *Vita* 16.

³⁴⁷ Suet. *Vesp.* 5.6, Cass. Dio 66.1.4. Dio's sources are not known; Price (2005) p. 109 speculates that Suetonius and Dio had the same source.

³⁴⁸ Euseb. *Hist. eccl.* III.9.2. Which library, he does not tell us. Rajak (2002) p. 229 speculates that the statue may have been erected later by Christians.

not mention the community other than peripherally. Following Herod's death, he says that 8,000 Jews in Rome flocked to support delegates from Judaea, arguing in front of Augustus for an independent country.³⁴⁹ Similarly, when an imposter with a physical resemblance to Alexander, Herod's son whom he executed, travelled to Rome to attempt to gain the Kingdom of Judaea, Josephus tells of presents given by the Jewish colony at Puteoli, where he landed, and of vast crowds thronging the narrow streets of Rome to see him.³⁵⁰ Some of these would presumably have been forcibly conscripted for military service in Sardinia a generation later by Tiberius in c. 19 CE. Philo tells us that in c. 40 CE, most of the Jews were citizens, having been emancipated, but appear to have been concentrated in the poorer area of Trastevere.³⁵¹

Non-Jewish sources, notably Juvenal and Martial, present a picture of Roman Jews as beggars and peddlers, albeit that there will be some element of satirical exaggeration.³⁵² Notwithstanding this, Leon notes that, to some extent, the impression is borne out by gravestones, many of which have ill carved letters and a low level of literacy.³⁵³ However, Leon also points to some funerary inscriptions indicating prosperity and literacy, the majority in Greek, albeit it is not possible to date any of the inscriptions definitely to the first century or before. That there were at least some wealthier members of the community is indicated by Josephus, who claims that Catullus, the Roman governor of Cyrene, encouraged false accusations of sedition to be made against 'the most reputable Jews in Alexandria and Rome', including Josephus himself³⁵⁴ and it is probably these same people who, he says in his autobiography, made numerous accusations against him.³⁵⁵ Further

³⁴⁹ *BJ* 2.80, 17.300.

³⁵⁰ *BJ* 2.105, *AJ* 17.328-331.

³⁵¹ Philo *Leg.* 155.

³⁵² See for example Juvenal *Satires* 3.12-16, 3.296, 6.542-547; Martial 12.57.13.

³⁵³ Leon (1960) pp. 78, 233-236.

³⁵⁴ *BJ* 7.447.

³⁵⁵ *Vita* 425.

accusations by ‘Jewish accusers’ were punished by Domitian.³⁵⁶ Would any of the indigenous Jewish population have been a ready recipient of the *Antiquities*? Goodman speculates that Josephus would probably have been seen by the Jews of Rome as their ‘spokesman’.³⁵⁷ The evidence is lacking for this assumption, not least because, as noted above, Josephus barely mentions the community. Even if he had some standing, would the community have been a natural outlet for the *Antiquities*? We do not know, but somehow, from what we do know, it seems unlikely that there were many who would have readily appreciated, to use Mason’s words, ‘his credential and subtlety as a writer’.³⁵⁸

Although Mason denies the likelihood of a Jewish audience outside Rome and sees significant sales to Jews around the Mediterranean as ‘a technically implausible project’,³⁵⁹ if a significant sophisticated Greek-speaking audience among the Jews in Rome is unlikely, Josephus may have envisaged it elsewhere. Rajak proposes that Josephus had a world view of Jewry, pointing to his summary of the subject matter in the *Antiquities* in 20.59-60 as ‘what happened to us in Egypt, Syria, Palestine’³⁶⁰ and Josephus was, of course, also keen to show the affairs of Jews east of the Euphrates. In addition, as Rajak points out, Josephus could well have had connections with the Jewish communities at Alexandria and Crete through his second and third wives, and the Jewish community at Cyrene, as he was named by insurrectionists there as a supporter.³⁶¹ Presumably he would also have maintained contact with former associates in Judaea, not all of whom would have turned against him for his support of the Romans, and some of whom might even have been grateful for his

³⁵⁶ *Vita* 429.

³⁵⁷ Goodman (1994a) p. 332.

³⁵⁸ Mason (2009) p. 349.

³⁵⁹ Mason (2005a) pp. 73, 79, 87 and (1998) p. 67.

³⁶⁰ Rajak (2005) p. 83.

³⁶¹ *Vita* 424, *BJ* 7.437-53.

rescuing them from Titus and his troops.³⁶² Josephus also stated that Vespasian gave him grants of land in Judaea,³⁶³ albeit whether he ever visited them is open to speculation.

In terms of circulation channels, Josephus claims that the first edition of the *Jewish War* was circulated in (presumably) Aramaic to ‘Parthians and Babylonians and the most remote tribes of Arabia with our countrymen beyond the Euphrates and the inhabitants of Adiabene’.³⁶⁴ We do not know how he achieved this but, assuming that he tells the truth, whatever channels for distribution of the *Jewish War* that existed in the 70s would have probably been extant in the 90s.

In conclusion, the vibrant literary social scene pictured by many first and early second century authors does not seem to have featured in Josephus’s life, not least because presumably he would have told his readers has this been the case. It is probable that the upper-class Hellenised easterners who came to Rome after the Jewish War and stayed there would have read, or at least received a copy of, the *Antiquities*. They could have in turn shared it with friends in Rome or arranged for a copy to be sent back to their Middle Eastern homelands. It is not impossible that copies would have found their way to libraries, both in Rome and in the East. It is, however, significant that, in the last analysis, no other contemporary author refers to his works and, before the advent of the Church Fathers, there is a single third century reference to his literary output by the pagan writer Porphyry, probably writing in Rome.³⁶⁵ Josephus tells us in the *Contra Apionem* that the *Antiquities* as a whole did not have the reception he had hoped for, albeit the apologetic form may simply be a rhetorical device.³⁶⁶ Indeed, one wonders, by the time of Origen and Eusebius,

³⁶² *Vita* 419-420.

³⁶³ *Vita* 422, 425.

³⁶⁴ *BJ* 1.3, 1.6.

³⁶⁵ Porph. *Abst.* IV, 11.

³⁶⁶ *C. Ap.* 1.2. See Barclay (2007) p. 330 n. 1163.

who wrote of Josephus in the third century, sparking an interest in the Christian scholarly community, how many copies of Josephus's works were actually in existence. Jerome may have called Josephus the Greek Livy,³⁶⁷ but it is unlikely that his literary contemporaries did.

4.4. Jews and the Flavian Emperors

In the early Roman Empire, there was, for the most part, an official policy of toleration towards Jews and Jewish practices, both in Judaea and the Diaspora. Other than three occasions where the Jews may have been expelled for a short while from Rome³⁶⁸ (probably as part of a periodic sweep against foreign cults) and Gaius's attempts to force the Jews to accept worship of him as Emperor,³⁶⁹ a policy of selected political support for Jews, according to Josephus, was started by Julius Caesar and continued by Augustus and Claudius. Such support arose out of either campaign assistance, in the case of Hyrcanus II and Antipater to Julius Caesar, or was as a consequence of delegating political control to local ruling dynasties (as with Herod and his family in Judaea), as well as controlling local tensions. It consisted of imperial or senate decrees to communities in Asia Minor and Alexandria requiring local communities to respect Diasporan Jews' ancestral customs of Sabbath observance, allow remission of funds to the Temple in Jerusalem and exemption from military service.³⁷⁰

It is also clear that an antipathy to Jews and Jewish customs that originated in the Hellenistic world at least as early as the fourth century BCE³⁷¹ had found its way to Rome and some

³⁶⁷ Jer. *Ep.* 22.35.

³⁶⁸ 19 CE and 41 CE (following an earlier expulsion in 139 BCE), albeit the evidence for these possible events is difficult to interpret.

³⁶⁹ *AJ* 18.261-309; Philo *Leg.* 186 ff.

³⁷⁰ See Chapter 3 p. 43.

³⁷¹ For example Hecataeus of Abdera *apud* Diod. Sic. 40.3.4 ('Moses introduced an antisocial and intolerant way of life'). Examples of other anti-Jewish Hellenistic authors are found in Josephus's *Contra Apionem*.

Romans by the middle of the first century CE. The essential Hellenistic complaint was one of anti-social behaviour, keeping separate from other races and failing to conform to social and religious norms, for example separate food, circumcision, celebration of the Sabbath, and rejection of other gods. Cicero, writing in the mid first century BCE, describes the Jewish practices as ‘incompatible with the majesty of our Empire, the dignity of our name and the institutions of our ancestors’, albeit within the context of a polemical defence of the Governor of Asia’s appropriation of the Jews’ Temple Tax bound for Jerusalem.³⁷² Horace and Ovid, two generations later, find the Sabbath merely noteworthy, as does Persius, writing in the mid first century CE.³⁷³ The first apparently unequivocal Roman condemnation of the Jews is by Seneca, also writing in the middle of the first century CE, who described the Jews’ customs as meaningless and of ‘a most pernicious race’ (*sceleratissimae gentis*), albeit that this appears to be the only explicit reference to the Jews in his entire corpus.³⁷⁴

Following the fall of Judaea, Vespasian celebrated his victory with a lavish triumph in Rome, and introduced the *Fiscus Judaicus* poll tax, paid by Jews throughout the Roman Empire to the Capitoline Temple, as they had similarly contributed previously to the Temple in Jerusalem.³⁷⁵ That Vespasian and subsequently Titus used the victory to bolster their legitimacy as emperors, after Vespasian’s initially uncertain route to power in 69 CE, is undeniable.³⁷⁶ The nature of the triumph described vividly by Josephus³⁷⁷ and the building projects by the two emperors that saw the erection of triumphal arches to Titus, the Flavian Amphitheatre and the Temple of Peace must have been deeply humiliating to

³⁷² *Flac.* 69, trans. Macdonald LCL 324. See also *Prov. Cons.* 5.10 ‘a people born to servitude’. Conversely, his contemporary Varro approves of the Jews’ aniconic religion (Varro *apud* Augustine *De Civ D.* 4.31) and Tacitus relates this aspect of Jewish belief without negative comment (*Hist.* 5.5.4).

³⁷³ *Hor. Sat.* 1.5.96-104, *Ov. Ars Am.* 1.75-80, 413-416, *Pers. Saturae* 5.176-184.

³⁷⁴ *De Superstitione* *apud* Augustine *De Civ D.* 6.11.

³⁷⁵ *BJ* 7.218. Cass. Dio 65.7.2.

³⁷⁶ Supported in literature by such writers as Valerius Flaccus and Silius Italicus.

³⁷⁷ *BJ* 7.123-162.

Jews in Rome, particularly as they were not the ones who had revolted.³⁷⁸ The subsequent issue of coinage bearing the inscription ‘*Judaea Capta*’ around the figure of a chained woman would have had a similar effect on Jews across the Diaspora. A further deterioration of the Jews’ status among the upper classes can also be seen in the fate of Berenice, sister of Agrippa II. Brought to Rome in expectation of marriage by Titus, whom she met during the campaign in Judaea, she was not popular with Romans, presumably because of her ancestry, and was ultimately banished.³⁷⁹

The *Fiscus Judaicus* was continued by Domitian, and under him, Suetonius tells us (*Dom.* 12.2) that ‘Besides other taxes, that on the Jews was levied with the utmost rigour’.³⁸⁰ More people undoubtedly paid the tax than before, and Suetonius tells us that the tax was imposed on two particular categories, namely those ‘qui vel inprofessi Iudaicam viverent vitam vel dissimulata origine imposita genti tributa non pependissent’ translated by Rolfe as ‘who without publicly acknowledging that faith yet lived as Jews, as well as those who concealed their origin and did not pay the tribute levied upon their people’.³⁸¹ The Latin text is difficult to interpret. The inference is that both classes of persons were not taxed under Vespasian or Titus.

Turning to the first category, ‘qui inprofessi Iudaicam viverent vitam’ (those who without publicly acknowledging that faith yet lived as Jews), could mean one or more of several categories of people who lived their life according to Jewish custom (but hid that from the outside world). These people who lived their life according to Jewish customs could be people born Jews, or people who had converted to Judaism (as Izates), or people who

³⁷⁸ See Millar (2005) for details of these projects.

³⁷⁹ Suet. *Tit.* 7, Cass. Dio 65.15.3-5, 66.8.1. For further examination of Berenice’s status in Rome, see Chapter 7 p. 196.

³⁸⁰ Trans. Rolfe LCL 38.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

adopted some of the customs of the Jews (sympathisers) but were not considered by themselves or their local Jewish community to be Jews.³⁸²

The first of these, Jews by birth, is fairly straightforward as a concept and it is not difficult to imagine that there were a significant number of these people secretly practising their ancestral customs. The second category, that of converts, is less straightforward.³⁸³ Goodman makes a number of points.³⁸⁴ Firstly, he argues that because there is no evidence that any Gentile writer at this time was aware that a Gentile could change their *gens*, what we now call conversion, as opposed to adopting Jewish customs, it is unlikely that Suetonius was referring to these. This argument seems debateable. Juvenal's 14th satire seems to refer to a father and son, the elder of whom adopted Jewish customs and the younger appears, by circumcision, to have changed to a Jew.³⁸⁵ Similarly, Tacitus's 'worst kind of rascals' renounce their ancestral religions (*spretis religionibus*), send money to the Temple, and 'those who go over to their [the Jews'] customs (*transgressi in morem eorum*) adopt circumcision', all of which looks like renunciation of one faith in favour of another.³⁸⁶ Albeit both examples are from works published in the first two or three decades of the second century, it seems unlikely that such knowledge was not widely spread in the last decade of the first.³⁸⁷

Goodman's second argument is that since non-Jews adopting Jewish customs were apparently likely to be charged with atheism and potentially executed, according to Cassius

³⁸² See Chapter 6 pp. 163-4 for an analysis of the evidence for sympathisers.

³⁸³ Keresztes (1973) p. 4 believes that this applies to converts, as does Williams (1990) p. 199, and Smallwood (1976) pp. 376-7.

³⁸⁴ Goodman (1990) pp. 196-198.

³⁸⁵ Juv. 14.96-106.

³⁸⁶ Tac. *Hist.* 5.5.1-2.

³⁸⁷ See also Epictetus *apud* Arrian, first decade second century CE who is clearly aware of the existence of converts (*Discourses* 2.9.20).

Dio (67.14.1-3), Domitian could not tax those activities that were deemed to be illegal.³⁸⁸ The passage in Dio is examined in detail later in this chapter, but for the purpose of analysing Suetonius's text, Goodman's argument relies on a proposition which views prosecution and taxation as mutually incompatible, and also implicitly that the machinery of justice runs perfectly. I am not aware of any Roman law principle which embodies this mutual incompatibility,³⁸⁹ and even if this were so, the mere fact that Gentiles continued to adopt Jewish customs (some to the point of conversion)³⁹⁰ must mean that any such attempted 'law enforcement' was not all-pervasive and those Gentiles who had converted could well have been open to taxation as an 'option' to avoid any more serious repercussions. For these reasons I do not believe that converts can be excluded from Suetonius's first category.

The problem with including the last category, adherers, is illustrated by Suetonius's example, taken from when he was a youth (*adulescentulus*), of the severity of imposition of the tax, where he states that an old man was stripped naked to determine whether he was circumcised.³⁹¹ Presumably if he was circumcised, he would pay the tax, otherwise not. Chapter 6 analyses in detail the arguments for whether Josephus thought that Izates as a non-circumcised man could be a Jew, but it seems very unlikely (particularly bearing in mind the emphasis given to circumcision in the Adiabene narrative) that the converse could arise, namely a male Gentile who has been circumcised to conform to the customs of the

³⁸⁸ Goodman (1990) pp. 196-8. See also Goodman (1989) pp. 40-44 and Rajak (1979) pp. 192-194. Thompson (1982) p. 337 also argues this, believing that the synagogue lists would have been frozen at 70 CE, perhaps (but only) supplemented by Gentile converts who were not Roman citizens, and it would have been illegal under the *maiestas* laws for Roman citizens to convert to Judaism. The issue of whether Jews were guilty of *maiestas* is discussed below.

³⁸⁹ Many modern legal systems both proscribe activities *and* tax them if carried on.

³⁹⁰ Antoninus's rescript of Hadrian's later proscription of circumcision would seem to indicate this (see Smallwood (1959, 1961)) as does Tacitus (*Hist.* 5.5.1-2.) and Juvenal (14.96-106) both writing in the first decades of the second century CE. Goodman (2005) pp. 169-70 doubts that many were attracted at the time of Domitian.

³⁹¹ *Dom.* 12.2.

Jews, yet considers himself not to be a Jew.³⁹² If this is correct, Suetonius's story indicates that only Jews who followed their ancestral customs rather than adherers were being hunted down, but that these might have included 'converts'.³⁹³

Suetonius's latter category, those who did not pay 'dissimulata origine', is less difficult to interpret and is likely to have included those who were born into the Jewish community, and presumably lived in the Diaspora, but had ceased to consider themselves as part of it and made efforts to hide their origins.³⁹⁴ Where this places such illustrious persons as Tiberius Julius Alexander, son of the Alexandrian alabarch of the Jewish community, and military commander under Titus, and described by Josephus as an apostate, we do not know.³⁹⁵

There is further evidence from two paragraphs of Dio. The first (67.14.1-3) tells us that 'Domitian slew, along with others, Flavius Clemens the consul and [his] wife Flavia Domitilla ... The charge against them both was that of atheism (ἄθεότητος), a charge on which many others who drifted into Jewish ways (ἄλλοι ἐς τὰ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἤθη ἐξοκέλλοντες) were condemned. Some of these were put to death, and the rest were at least deprived of their property.'³⁹⁶ There are a number of difficulties here. Firstly, many commentators assume that Clemens and his wife were affecting Jewish ways.³⁹⁷ I do not believe that this is necessarily so. The charge of atheism was in common, but the nature of

³⁹² Keresztes (1973) p. 5 assumes that there could be some circumcised adherers, as does Williams (1990) pp. 200-201. But see Petronius *Fragmenta* 37 (Stern (1974-1984) p. 494), who appears to see copying Jewish customs as different from circumcision, the latter being the definitive act in becoming a Jew.

³⁹³ Heemstra (2012) p. 191 also appears to believe that 'adherers' were not the target of the *Fiscus Judaicus*. Smallwood (1976) p. 377 disagrees, and believes those she calls 'Judaizers' were intended to be caught by the tax.

³⁹⁴ So Smallwood (1976) p. 376.

³⁹⁵ *AJ* 20.100. Tacitus at any rate seems unaware of his origins (*Hist.* 1.11.1), albeit Juvenal may be referring to him as both Jewish and Egyptian in *Satire* 11.129-131.

³⁹⁶ Trans. Cary LCL 176.

³⁹⁷ E.g. Williams (1990) p. 196, Griffin (2000) p. 68, Stern (1974-1984) vol. II pp. 380-384, Sevenster (1975) p. 98.

the atheism need not have been. Secondly, it is not obvious who these ‘many others’ were and what ‘the charge of atheism’ means. One might assume that they were relatively important, given that they are mentioned in the same passage as Clemens and his wife. As to ἀθεότης, Plutarch, a broad contemporary albeit writing after Domitian, defines this as ‘not believing in the existence of gods’ but gives no indication that such a belief was a crime.³⁹⁸ Albeit that it has been asserted that the Jews were frequently described as atheists,³⁹⁹ I can find only one reference before 100 CE to this, namely Josephus’s claim that Apollonius Molon called the Jews ἀθέους.⁴⁰⁰ Thirdly, presumably drifting into Jewish ways implies that those punished were not in fact Jews by birth, but could have been those who adopted Jewish customs or even converts.

In addition, Cassius Dio tells us (68.1.2) that ‘Nerva released all who were on trial for ἀσέβεια (translated by Cary as *maiestas*) and no persons were permitted to accuse anybody of ἀσέβεια or of adopting the Jewish mode of life (τοῖς δὲ δὴ ἄλλοις οὐτ’ ἄσεβείας οὐτ’ Ἰουδαϊκοῦ βίου καταιτιᾶσθαι τινας συνεχώρησε)’.⁴⁰¹ Again, quite what either ἀσέβεια or Ἰουδαϊκοῦ βίου means is by no means clear. Sevenster⁴⁰² believes that ἀθεότης and ἀσέβεια are synonymous, linking Dio 67.14.1-3 with 68.1.2 and basing his argument on Philo *Mos.* 2.193-4, 196 and *Leg.* 163 where both words are mentioned together. However, the context is Egyptian, rather than Roman, and the phrase seems to be pejoratively descriptive, rather than a technical exposition. In this respect, Cary’s LCL translation ‘of *adopting* (my italics) the Jewish mode of life’ imports the concept of change,

³⁹⁸ *De Superst.* 2. So Goodman (2005) p. 174. Heemstra (2012) p. 191 however believes ‘atheism’ to have been a crime under Domitian, linking Dio 67.14.1-3 with Pliny’s persecution of Christians under Trajan, and that such ‘atheists’ were discovered during efforts to collect the *Fiscus*, with resultant confiscations of property contributing to the *Fiscus* collection. The backwards leap between two rather different imperial regimes seems unsupported, as does the hypothesis concerning the resultant quasi-legal process.

³⁹⁹ Williams (1990) p. 197, Smallwood (1976) p. 379.

⁴⁰⁰ *C. Ap.* 2.148. There are however many references to Jews’ disrespect for, or not worshipping the same as, other gods (see Smallwood (1976) p. 379 n. 82 for references).

⁴⁰¹ Trans. Cary LCL 176.

⁴⁰² Sevenster (1975) p. 98.

i.e. they didn't have a Jewish way of life before, but now they did, and would appear to be Cary's way also of linking this passage to 67.14.1-3, and of drifting into the apparently capital crime of ἀθεότης.⁴⁰³ This translation, however, is unsupported by Dio's language, which has no mention of 'adoption'.⁴⁰⁴ In summary, therefore, there is no specific evidence to link ἀθεότης and ἀσέβεια.

If ἀσέβεια is not ἀθεότης, what is it? Dio (57.9.1) relates that ἀσέβεια had begun to be used as a charge of insulting the emperor during the Principate of Tiberius, albeit such charges in either act or deed were forbidden under Claudius (Dio 60.3.5-6). In linking ἀσέβεια with *maiestas* Cary is probably correct.⁴⁰⁵ As to its meaning in this context, *maiestas* was an elastic concept expanded considerably under Domitian.⁴⁰⁶ It is conceivable that Domitian's expansion of *maiestas* could have led to the Jews' by then well-known refusal to worship the emperor (for example their refusal to worship a statue of the Emperor Gaius) being classified as *maiestas*, a view that would be considerably reinforced if the epithet 'Dominus et Deus', which Suetonius asserts became his regular title, led to an actual requirement to be treated as divine.⁴⁰⁷

There are however three problems with this approach. Firstly it is by no means clear that Domitian actually required worship of himself. Jones doubts this, as does Griffin.⁴⁰⁸ In addition, presumably this would have applied to *all* Jews, rather than just adherers and surely the sources for Domitian's reign, particularly Suetonius, would have mentioned this. Thirdly, a Jewish way of life in any event appears to *not* be ἀσέβεια because of Dio's use

⁴⁰³ Keresztes (1973) pp. 6-7 also makes this link.

⁴⁰⁴ So also Thompson (1982) p. 341.

⁴⁰⁵ For other examples of ἀσέβεια as *maiestas* see Cass. Dio 65.9.1, 66.19.1.

⁴⁰⁶ Suet. *Dom* 12.2 'It was enough to allege any action or word derogatory to the majesty of the prince (Satis erat obici quaecumque factum dictumve adversus maiestatem principis)' (trans. Rolfe LCL 38).

⁴⁰⁷ Suet. *Dom*. 13. A view taken by Smallwood (1976) p. 379.

⁴⁰⁸ Jones (1992) pp. 108-9, Griffin (2000) p. 81-82.

of *ὄντ' ἀσεβείας ὄντ' Ἰουδαϊκοῦ βίου*.⁴⁰⁹ If *Ἰουδαϊκοῦ βίου* does not relate to a capital crime regarding worship, what, therefore can this mean? The most likely explanation is that the accusations of a Jewish way of life relate not to ἀθεότης or *maiestas* but to the *Fiscus* and that Dio conflates two distinct and different crimes under Domitian into one sentence. The (false) accusation in relation to a *Ἰουδαϊκοῦ βίου* was of avoiding the *Fiscus* when one had no obligation to pay it (either for example most obviously because a person had no connection in fact with Jews and Jewish practices, or because Domitian had wrongly extended the tax to cover those who were Jews by gens but not by way of life).

There is also evidence of events in the reign of Domitian's successor, Nerva, which may shed light on Domitian's reign. Coins issued by Nerva proclaim that *Fisci Judaici calumnia sublata*. There are however significant problems also with this text. The usual translation 'the bringing of malicious accusations [by delators, professional accusers who would gain financially by the accusations] to the Treasury for Jewish Affairs has been brought to an end', if correct, would imply that there were informers who tried to bring those who were not eligible into the tax net.⁴¹⁰ This interpretation would show that abuses of the system were no longer tolerated, but does not in itself enlighten as to who should have paid the tax. However, an interpretation could be that the malicious accusations were of falsely accusing someone of Jewish practices (either because they were born a Jew but had ceased Jewish practices, or were entirely unconnected with Jews) and that such false accusations were

⁴⁰⁹ Contra Keresztes (1973) p. 6.

⁴¹⁰ Smallwood (1976) pp. 377-8 and Williams (1990) p. 200. Goodman (2007b) rejects the traditional translation, as it treats the singular 'calumnia' as plural and instead prefers as a more radical translation 'the false accusation [against all Jews made by] the treasury for Jewish affairs has been wiped away', meaning that the accusation of disloyalty by Jews against the Roman state (the revolt of CE 66 to 70) was no longer to be levelled against the Jews and that the process of collection of the tax was abolished (albeit reinstated shortly thereafter). There is however no strong corroborative evidence to support this hypothesis, and it is hard to see how the revolt was not 'disloyal'.

brought to an end, by which it was presumably meant that obviously corrupt collusion between delators and the Treasury for Jewish Affairs would no longer be tolerated.

In the light of the above, it is therefore very difficult to provide an analysis of the political position of Jews (and those who to a greater or lesser extent adopted Jewish customs) under Domitian because of the vagueness of the sources and their potentially contradictory messages. That Jews by *gens* continued to be able to practise their religion seems beyond doubt.⁴¹¹ It is possibly the case, as Williams suggests,⁴¹² that at least in part, Domitian was not extending the ambit of the tax but merely ensuring that it was applied as originally intended, against Jews who followed Jewish practices in secret to avoid payment, against a background of somewhat lax taxation by Titus⁴¹³ and against a financial crisis that arose as a result of war and an extensive building programme in c. 85 CE, a date that would coincide with Suetonius being around 15 years old and therefore an *adulescentulus*.⁴¹⁴ However, the imposition of tax against those born Jews who no longer professed themselves to be Jews (Suetonius's second category, *dissimulata origine*) may well have been innovatory.

The restrictions brought in by Nerva, mentioned in Dio 68, were probably around accusations of those born Jews by *gens* as living as Jews when in fact they were not so doing, in other words those Jews who no longer adhered to their ancestral customs were being improperly caught in the taxation net.⁴¹⁵ If this is correct, this would corroborate the interpretation given of Suetonius's second category ('*dissimulata origine*') and indeed an interpretation of the coinage, as well as coinciding with the interpretation of Dio 68.1.2 given above, and would imply either that these people were never meant to be subject to

⁴¹¹ Cass. Dio 65.7.2, albeit the temple at Leontopolis was destroyed (*BJ* 7.421).

⁴¹² Williams (1990) p. 199.

⁴¹³ Suet. *Tit.* 8.

⁴¹⁴ Jones (1992) pp. 76-77. It is also the case that Suetonius's narrative on the tax is contained within a section on Domitian's efforts more generally to balance the books.

⁴¹⁵ This interpretation might be seen to be corroborated by Cassius Dio's assertion (65.7.2) that 'Jews who continued to observe their ancestral customs' paid the tax.

tax or that this was an ambiguity that was cleared up under Nerva.⁴¹⁶ However, the evidence in part comes from Cassius Dio, who lived more than 100 years after the event, and it may well be that he was conflating the payment of the *Fiscus* in his own time by practising Jews as being the status quo under Nerva. One is also left therefore without a real answer as to why those people (non-Jews or converts) who drifted into Jewish ways were executed, as identified by Dio in 67.14.2, if atheism was not a crime. A clue to the reason for Clemens' death may lie with Suetonius who does not mention ἀθεότης and says that Clemens was put to death on 'a very slight suspicion', presumably for treason.⁴¹⁷ This may also be true for the others mentioned, assuming they too were high profile.

In this environment, not surprisingly, other literary evidence from this and the period immediately thereafter shows a more strident tone than before. Quintilian, who had connections to Domitian as his great-nephews' (and designated successors') teacher, castigates Moses as a member of a *gens pernicioosa*.⁴¹⁸ Martial derides circumcision⁴¹⁹ and is clearly keen to be seen to be praising the Flavian regime in relation to the destruction of Jerusalem.⁴²⁰ Juvenal, writing a little later, despises the beggarly nature of Jews in Rome, their misanthropy and, in particular, sees the man who adopts Jewish customs as being the thoroughly undesirable cause of his son's conversion to Judaism.⁴²¹

However, the principal source of disparaging remarks about Jews from this period is Tacitus. Writing (probably under Trajan) about Jews in Book 5 of the *Histories*, within the context of a history of the siege of Jerusalem in 70 CE, Tacitus comes from a background

⁴¹⁶ The alternative, that Nerva deliberately changed Vespasian's policy, is less likely, as Vespasian by this time was considered divine (see Heemstra (2012) p. 193), albeit Goodman (2007b) suggests that the febrile atmosphere upon Nerva's succession in CE 96 may have overcome such political difficulty.

⁴¹⁷ *Dom.* 15.

⁴¹⁸ *Inst.* III, 7:21.

⁴¹⁹ *Epigrammata* VII 30, 35; XI 94.

⁴²⁰ *Epigrammata* II 2; VII 55; X 50.

⁴²¹ 14.96-106.

of advancement under the Flavian dynasty and therefore in sympathy with a political philosophy that saw the Jewish War as a Flavian triumph. In a lengthy *discursus* from the action, he excoriates Moses for introducing ‘religious practices, quite opposed to those of other religions’ and Jews generally for regarding ‘as profane all that we hold sacred; on the other hand, they permit all that we abhor’, describing Jewish customs as base and abominable and Jews as misanthropic.⁴²²

However, these remarks, particularly of Tacitus and Juvenal, need to be seen in a wider context. Neither reserved their venom exclusively for the Jews and both were exemplars of a wider Roman society that was essentially xenophobic. Although a satirist, and therefore relying on exaggeration as a stock-in-trade, Juvenal was seen to be genuinely vitriolic about Greeks (disingenuous oleaginous liars), Egyptians (lunatic zoolatrists) and Orientals generally.⁴²³ Like Seneca, he was concerned that Rome has become overrun by foreigners.⁴²⁴ Tacitus, although clearly writing in another genre, had similar prejudices against the German tribes.⁴²⁵ However, the Romans saw religious differences as no more than barbarian superstition and differences in custom. It was the Jews’ perceived misanthropy and refusal to accept other Roman gods that made them uncivilised, a race apart, to these commentators.⁴²⁶

In conclusion, the need for a Flavian triumph upon Vespasian’s accession in 70 CE, a shortage of funds and subsequent emperors’ reliance on Flavian connections for legitimacy produced a *Fiscus Judaicus* and an institutional need for a vanquished Judaea. The tax itself in one sense was obviously ‘anti-Jewish’, albeit that Jews who would otherwise have paid

⁴²² *Hist.* 5.4.1-5.

⁴²³ *Satires* 3 expounds at length on foreigners.

⁴²⁴ Juvenal *Satires* 3.62-65.

⁴²⁵ *Germ.* 39.4, 43.4, 45.1.3; *Hist.* 4.61.

⁴²⁶ For further discussion on Roman attitudes to foreigners, see later in this chapter (pp. 110-111).

the Temple tax were, outside Egypt, probably no worse off economically,⁴²⁷ and there is no evidence that previous decrees were revoked.⁴²⁸ In this respect, it would appear that for Vespasian and Titus, glorying in Judaea's political extinction suited the Flavian purpose and subverting the Temple tax was a useful economic strategy but any wider prejudicial measures against Jews had little or no value. In particular, unlike earlier that century, we hear of no edict banning Jews from Rome.

There were, however, two likely consequences of the Flavian political imperative which may have contributed to a worsening status for Jews, particularly those who, like Josephus, would otherwise have expected, particularly as Roman citizens, the respect accorded to foreign nobility. In the first case, the likely extension of the *Fiscus* under Domitian to Jews who no longer practised Jewish customs may well have had the effect of inducing a feeling of persecution. This political atmosphere in turn may have been seen as encouraging a natural Roman xenophobia to be especially focussed on the Jews, which found expression in the literary output of the time. Care must, however, be taken with the literary evidence and it may therefore be an overstatement to conclude that those authors therefore represented the entirety of the Roman upper class. In particular, all the Flavian era writers mentioned were born outside Italy (as was Seneca a generation before) and were part of a growing provincial influx to Rome. In this respect, as 'new men', they may well have been somewhat insecure about their status, and may have wanted to be seen to be demonstrably 'Roman' by a literary 'bashing' of provincials including, but not limited to, the Jews.

⁴²⁷ Albeit, at least from ostraca in Edfu, Egypt, the imposition in Egypt was now on women, children and slaves, a 'family' tax (Thompson (1982) pp. 332-3, Smallwood (1976) p. 373). Whether this extended beyond Egypt is unknown.

⁴²⁸ Josephus in fact tells us that Titus resisted the demand by citizens of Antioch to strip the Jews of their rights (*BJ* 7.100-111).

Josephus himself also provides some evidence for the deterioration in the status of the Jews. The inconsistency between the *Jewish War* and *The Antiquities*, namely that his original belief in the *Jewish War* that a history of the Jews would be superfluous because already adequately covered by others (*BJ* 1.17) had mutated by the time of writing the *Antiquities* to a belief that those others had done an incomplete or substandard job (20.262), has already been noted earlier in this chapter. It is not unreasonable to ask why Josephus had this change of heart, and something appears to have happened in the intervening twenty or so years to make him change his mind as to the necessity of production. What had happened seems very likely to have been a growing feeling, at least by Josephus, that, after the failure of the Jewish Revolt, the status of Jews under Roman rule had materially deteriorated. That there had been an Egyptian antipathy to Jews, mirrored by at least some Hellenistic authors, would not have been new. What may have changed for the worse was the view of Romans towards Jews. It is very possibly this deterioration in status to which he refers in his opening paragraph (*AJ* 1.3-4) when he states that his first reason for writing is that he has been compelled by events, a statement amplified by his reference to the *Jewish War* but in fact applicable to both works, thus, in Josephus's eyes, necessitating a full length history.⁴²⁹

4.5. Freedom of literary expression under Domitian

In order to assess how dangerous it would have been for Josephus to have been advancing what could have been seen as a counter-cultural view of Jews and the Jewish religion, it is useful to examine what the boundaries to free speech there might have been under Domitian, particularly in published literary format. The principal sources for a view of

⁴²⁹ A conclusion also drawn by Mason (1991) p. 192.

Domitian's reign are the works of Tacitus,⁴³⁰ Pliny⁴³¹ and Suetonius,⁴³² all of whom were contemporary with Domitian. The three, born to fathers of equestrian rank, grew up under the Flavian regime and prospered under imperial service. Tacitus and Pliny had careers advanced by Domitian and both were senators during his Principate. Suetonius, younger by a decade or so, had a slightly later career, probably under Trajan and Hadrian, after the violent end of Domitian's reign and subsequent *damnatio memoriae*. They were personally acquainted with one another and none wrote, or at least appear to have been published, during the reign of Domitian himself.

Those sources who comment directly on Domitian are almost universally hostile. Tacitus comments on the Emperor and his reign directly in the *Agricola*, most notably at the beginning and the end of the work.⁴³³ The portrait painted is that of a despot and hypocrite and an Emperor under whom merit in any field was dangerous. Tacitus, in describing Domitian's sham victory in Germany, deliberately links him by inference with both Gaius and Nero, the two other excoriated first century emperors.⁴³⁴ Pliny too repeatedly paints a picture of terrified aristocracy in the *Panegyricus*.

Who dared then to open his mouth or say a word except the poor wretches called on for the first speech? The rest, too terrified to move, endured the forced necessity of giving assent in silence, without rising from their seats, their mental anguish as painful as their physical fears.⁴³⁵

Before examining in detail what the sources tell us about this apparent reign of terror, a few words of caution. Firstly, Tacitus and Pliny had every reason to paint a picture of Domitian as black as possible. Both had achieved successful careers under Domitian. Tacitus directly acknowledges this in *Histories* 1.1., and indeed blames himself and others for acquiescing

⁴³⁰ *Agricola, Germania, Dialogus de Oratoribus, Histories and Annals.*

⁴³¹ *Letters and Panegyricus.*

⁴³² *The Lives of the Caesars.*

⁴³³ *Agr.* 1-3, *Agr.* 39-45. Unfortunately, the books of his *Histories* which described the reign of Domitian have not survived.

⁴³⁴ *Agr.* 39. See also Beard (2007) pp. 185-6, 271-2.

⁴³⁵ *Pan.* 76.3, trans. Radice LCL 59.

to Domitian's regime.⁴³⁶ In these circumstances, violent regime change may well demand repudiation of the previous regime, the more so when one has benefitted from it.⁴³⁷

In support of these pictures of oppression and terror, both Suetonius and Dio give examples of both aristocrats and others who were executed or banished under Domitian's orders. Most of the examples are to be found in Suetonius *Domitian* 10 and Dio 67.12-14.⁴³⁸ Jones provides a useful list of these, of whom the majority had no obvious connection with freedom of expression, but were despatched because of actual or perceived threats of treason in the form of revolution, or for no discernible reason.⁴³⁹ However, the most notorious of the persecutions involved four men and three women, closely connected both by ties of marriage and potentially by a common philosophic outlook (commonly called by scholars the Stoic Group), who were charged with various literary crimes in 93 CE and two of whom had their books publicly burned. A detailed analysis of these trials is beyond the scope of this thesis but it has been argued persuasively by Rogers⁴⁴⁰ that the real grounds for indictment were probably conspiracy to commit treason and that the book burning was seen by officials as a quasi *damnatio memoriae* and by Tacitus, Pliny and Suetonius as yet another example both of the suppression of liberty under the regime and the danger of literary pursuit, another contrast with the sunny uplands of the succeeding principates of Nerva and Trajan.⁴⁴¹

In summary, therefore, there is very little specific evidence to back up the claims of Tacitus that 'they imagined, no doubt, that in those flames [of the burnt books] disappeared the

⁴³⁶ *Agr.* 2.

⁴³⁷ For an alternative view, see Southern (1997) p. 1 who doubts whether regime change alone can account for the vituperative prose.

⁴³⁸ Cassius Dio was not a contemporary of Domitian and we do not know his sources.

⁴³⁹ Jones (1992) pp. 180-192.

⁴⁴⁰ Rogers (1960) p. 23. Saller (1990) p. 10 agrees with this analysis.

⁴⁴¹ The possible reaction of Josephus's readers to some of the Adiabene narrative's apparently Stoic themes in the light of the demise of the Stoic group is examined in Chapter 7 pp. 202-3.

voice of the people, the liberty of the Senate, the conscience of mankind' at least in a literary sense.⁴⁴² That Domitian was unpopular with the senate seems reasonably clear,⁴⁴³ albeit the format of the evidence, at least from Tacitus and Pliny, is highly rhetorical, and as such is used to suit a purpose, rather than provide a balanced narrative of events. It is also reasonable to believe Tacitus when he states that historians of the war between the Flavians and Vitellius had to exercise self-imposed censorship.⁴⁴⁴ However, the evidence examined so far has been of the more sensational kind, namely executions and banishment. When we move away from the arena of the senate and its political relationship with Domitian, what is the evidence more generally for the notion that, as stated by Ogilvie and Richmond, 'freedom of judgement and expression was suppressed'?⁴⁴⁵ What is the evidence that works produced in Domitian's Principate had to appear flattering, or at least not either expressly or impliedly critical of the emperor in order to avoid Domitian's wrath?

Cassius Dio (67.4.2) claims that Domitian was hostile to those who did not flatter him, a view also expressed by Pliny.⁴⁴⁶ Pliny also claims that, under Trajan, free speech is allowed - 'under you the liberal arts are restored, to breathe and live in their own country' - obviously implying that under Domitian they were not.⁴⁴⁷ Juvenal claims, writing even after Domitian's death, that to write about the present and near past is dangerous.⁴⁴⁸ However, from a society described in as many words by Tacitus and Pliny as afraid to open its mouth, there is a considerable quantity of surviving literature published during Domitian's reign, mostly by authors born in the Julio-Claudian principates. Foremost

⁴⁴² *Agr.* 2.2., trans. Hutton & Peterson LCL 35.

⁴⁴³ But not with the troops, who appear to have been horrified at his assassination (Suetonius *Dom.* 23).

⁴⁴⁴ *Hist.* 2.101.1.

⁴⁴⁵ Cornelii Taciti, *De Vita Agricola*, ed. Ogilvie and Richmond, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1967 p. 134 n. 2.2.

⁴⁴⁶ *Pan.* 1.6.

⁴⁴⁷ *Pan.* 47. Albeit, as many have commented, Trajan's rule produced surprisingly little literature that has survived.

⁴⁴⁸ 1.149-171.

among these are the poets Martial and Statius, both of whom sought Domitian's (and others') patronage in Rome. Additionally, Quintilian, author of the *Institutio Oratoria*, a treatise on rhetoric, was published during the last period of Domitian's reign, as was Frontinus, patrician former consul under Vespasian in CE 72/3 and author of the *Strategemata*, a treatise on warfare.⁴⁴⁹ To these can be added Silius Italicus, who published *Punica*, an epic poem mixing myth with Roman history, during Domitian's Principate. Last, but by no means least, Josephus himself published the *Jewish Antiquities* and *Vita* in CE 94 and may have published *Contra Apionem* before Domitian's death.

Albeit that Domitian is acknowledged by the sources as at least representing himself as a patron of the arts,⁴⁵⁰ whether he exercised specific patronage to any great extent is hard to determine. He took an interest in the games that he founded, and presided over them personally.⁴⁵¹ Whether he took a direct quasi-Augustan interest in literature seems doubtful, and Martial decries the lack of such a figure,⁴⁵² as does Juvenal,⁴⁵³ writing somewhat later, albeit this could be a stock phrase. Poems dedicated to the Emperor were apparently submitted by Statius to the Emperor prior to publication⁴⁵⁴ and Coleman believes that Martial did the same.⁴⁵⁵ Both Martial and Statius claim that they were rewarded by the Emperor for their efforts,⁴⁵⁶ and Juvenal refers to Statius and Quintilian, as well as the actor Paris, as being the beneficiaries of Domitian's largesse.⁴⁵⁷ Josephus himself claims Domitian as a patron, following Vespasian and Titus, albeit this is more likely to be

⁴⁴⁹ Turner (2007) p. 426 suggests that the titles *Imperator Caesar Domitianus Augustus Germanicus* as a salutation are very unlikely to have been made after Domitian's death and *damnatio memoriae*.

⁴⁵⁰ Tac. *Hist.* 4.86, Suet. *Dom.* 2.

⁴⁵¹ Suet. *Dom.* 4.4.

⁴⁵² *Epigrams* 8.56.5.

⁴⁵³ *Satires* 7.1-6.

⁴⁵⁴ Stat. *Silv.* 4 *praef.* 28-9.

⁴⁵⁵ Coleman (1986) pp. 3100-1.

⁴⁵⁶ *Silv.* 3.1.61-64 and Mart. *Epigrams* 9.18.

⁴⁵⁷ *Satires* 7.

deferred reward for political services in Judaea, together with his publication of the *Jewish War*, than for any subsequent literary efforts.⁴⁵⁸

While both Statius and Martial wrote poems in praise (and in Statius's case nearer to adulation) of Domitian, it is by no means clear that this was demanded of them.⁴⁵⁹ In addition, how genuine the ostensible praise was is a matter for scholarly debate. There is no doubt that under Domitian, as had been the case under earlier emperors, the written, and particularly the spoken, rhetorical, word was not intended to have a singular meaning. At its most extreme, Quintilian states (albeit within the context of rhetoric)

For you can speak with success against those declamation tyrants as openly as you please, so long as what you say can be given a different interpretation, because it is only the risk of conviction, not also offence that has to be avoided. If this danger can be eluded by an ambiguous remark, everybody is in favour of the trick.⁴⁶⁰

Martial, in particular, appears in many of his poems that mention or are addressed to Domitian to be somewhat tongue in cheek. However, undoubtedly Statius and Martial were rabbits,⁴⁶¹ to borrow the metaphor from Martial 1.22, which would mean that an element of teasing might be acceptable from poets with no political backing, but there is a fundamental difference between teasing and ridicule.

Frontinus, however, was, socially speaking, somewhat distanced from Statius and Martial, as a senator, soldier, and aristocrat and the *Strategemata* was designed to be read by other aristocrats. Although he mentions Domitian several times, the references are essentially factual. Silius Italicus, a former consul (and delator) under Nero⁴⁶² and friend of

⁴⁵⁸ *Vita* 429.

⁴⁵⁹ For examples of fulsome praise, see Mart. *Epigrams* 4.1 (*On Domitian's Birthday*) and 8.65 (*Domitian's triumphal arch*), and Statius *Silv.* Book 4.1, 2 and 3 (*The Emperor's Seventeenth Consulship, In gratitude to the Emperor Domitian and The Via Domitiana*).

⁴⁶⁰ *Inst.* 9.2.67, trans. Russell LCL 127.

⁴⁶¹ Martial uses the word *lepus*, a hare, as a metaphor for an insignificant being.

⁴⁶² Plin. *Ep.* 3.7, Mart. *Epigrams* 8.66, 11.48.

Vespasian's rival Vitellius⁴⁶³ speaks glowingly of Domitian in his epic poem *Punica*, about the Carthaginian Wars, written at least in part during Domitian's reign, albeit there is no evidence that this is anything other than genuine thanks to the Flavians for rehabilitating someone with a dubious past.

In conclusion, to believe the words of Pliny and Tacitus and see freedom of expression as impossible is to oversimplify the situation that prevailed, particularly in the last few years of Domitian's reign. Domitian was undoubtedly unpopular with the Senate and he in turn was suspicious of plots (real or imaginary) against him. He was also sensitive to adverse comments about himself or his family, but in this respect was only carrying on a tradition begun by Augustus and extended by Tiberius. In those circumstances an aristocrat (in other words a potential rival or supporter of a rival) who either wrote or behaved in a manner that could be adversely interpreted was likely to be courting danger. No doubt, conversely, flattery of the Emperor didn't do any harm, whether or not it was genuinely meant or even believed.

Professional authors and poets who were not aristocrats may well have flattered Domitian as part of a desire for patronage or purely as political expediency, either publicly through literary contests or through private submission of output. There is, however, no compelling evidence that flattery was demanded by Domitian and some evidence to believe that light-hearted jesting, particularly in respect of his magnificence, was not dangerous. Clearly, a line could be crossed, and Suetonius's story of the anonymous individual thrown to the dogs because he disrespected the Emperor's gladiator was no doubt a widely known

⁴⁶³ He was one of two witnesses at the conference between Vitellius and Flavius Sabinus, Vespasian's brother (Tac. *Hist.* 3.65).

cautionary tale!⁴⁶⁴ In these circumstances, it seems unlikely that Josephus's attempts to rehabilitate the Jews in the eyes of Rome would have been a particularly dangerous activity.

4.6. Parthia in the eyes of Rome

This section examines the impact that Josephus's use of a Parthian, Izates, as a hero and role model would have had on a Roman reader. At first glance, it would seem counterproductive to use as a hero anyone not Roman to embody many of the characteristics admired by Rome, in an environment where, to use Pliny's words as reasonably typical of first century CE Roman thought, Rome, or at least Italy, was seen as

chosen by the providence of the gods to make heaven itself more glorious, to unite scattered empires, to make manners gentle, to draw together in converse by community of language the jarring and uncouth tongues of so many nations, to give mankind civilisation, and in a word to become throughout the world the single fatherland of all the races.⁴⁶⁵

To a certain extent, the Roman concept of civilisation as *humanitas* drove perceptions of other races. Caesar judged different Gallic and German groups by how near to or far from *humanitas* (seen as synonymous with the extent of Rome's influence) they were.⁴⁶⁶ Strabo writes of Massalia in southern Gaul transforming itself from barbarian outpost to philosophy school preferred by some Romans to Athens as a place to study.⁴⁶⁷ This meant that those who were thoroughly Hellenised, like Agrippa II, might not be seen as entirely barbarian, and Eratosthenes, quoted by Strabo, argued that the world should not be divided into Greeks (and therefore by Strabo's time also Romans, albeit not all Greeks might wholeheartedly agree) and barbarians, but into 'good qualities and bad qualities; for not only are many of the Greeks bad, but many of the barbarians are refined'.⁴⁶⁸ Although, for

⁴⁶⁴ *Dom.* 10, also presumably referred to in Plin. *Pan.* 33.3.

⁴⁶⁵ Plin. *HN* 3.39, trans. Rackham LCL 352.

⁴⁶⁶ Caes. *BGall.* 1.1.

⁴⁶⁷ Strabo *Geography* 4.1.5.

⁴⁶⁸ Strabo *Geography* 1.4.9, trans. Jones LCL 49. Strabo himself is unconvinced by the argument.

the most part, the Roman view was that *humanitas* stopped and barbarism started at the edge of the Empire,⁴⁶⁹ the boundary was a fluid one and the fact that Parthia had adopted aspects of Hellenism, such as Greek language and forms of literature, presumably blurred the boundary still further.⁴⁷⁰

This section therefore seeks to examine what Romans thought of Parthians, particularly in the late first century CE, by examining the history of political and military exchanges between the two empires in the first century CE and using this background to examine literary portrayals of Parthians, particularly passages relating to Parthia in Tacitus's *Annals*, for possible clues as to late first century/early second century CE attitudes.

A major impact on Rome and Romans was felt following Augustus's treaty with Phraates IV of Parthia in 20 BCE, enabling the recovery of prisoners and standards taken by the Parthians following ill-fated campaigns by Crassus in 53 BCE and Antony in 36 BCE, along with allowing Augustus to impose a king on Armenia. This was a moment of Roman national catharsis, celebrated by Augustus with the erection of a triumphal arch and the placing of the standards in the Temple of Mars Ultor.⁴⁷¹ Although there was a subsequent literary and sculptural celebration of supposed Roman superiority and Parthian inferiority resulting from Augustus's 'triumph',⁴⁷² it is also clear that, whatever the rhetoric, the diplomatic relationship was seen to be one of equality.⁴⁷³ As part of the continuing jockeying for power in Armenia, Augustus sent his grandson Gaius to Syria in 2 BCE, and, since presumably neither side had an appetite for war, Gaius met with Phraataces, King of

⁴⁶⁹ Sidebottom (2007) p. 5.

⁴⁷⁰ See Momigliano (1975) p. 139.

⁴⁷¹ RG 29.2, Cass. Dio 54.8. Spawforth (1994) p. 240 believes that deliberate attempts were made to conflate Augustus's diplomatic triumph with the Greek triumph over Persia some five hundred years previously by using the term 'Persian' as a conscious synonym for 'Parthian'.

⁴⁷² Ov. *Fast.* 5.545; Hor. *Odes* 1.2.51, 2.9.17, 3.5.1-8, 4.15.4-8; *Epist.* 1.12.27-8; Verg. *Aen.* 6.853. Ovid (*Ars am.* 1.199) talks about a 'righteous cause'. See also Zanker (2010) p. 79 fig. 53 and Schneider (2007) figs. 9 (p. 61), 10 (p. 62), 11 (p. 62), 18 (p. 71), 21 (p. 73), 22 (p. 73) for images of submissive Parthians.

⁴⁷³ Strabo describes the Parthians as equals, 'in a way, rivals, of the Romans' (11.9.2).

Parthia, on an island in the Euphrates, the river being now the de-facto boundary between the two empires.⁴⁷⁴

Against this backdrop, it is clear that, in the first century CE, both powers were wary of direct military engagement. Artabanus's reminder in c. 19 CE to Germanicus of the treaty in 20 BCE and Germanicus's compliance with Artabanus's request to have his troublesome predecessor Vonones removed from Syria is evidence of diplomatic relations around a *realpolitik* that recognised each other's sphere of influence each side of the Euphrates.⁴⁷⁵

We do however see vague glimpses of Parthian ambition to cross the Euphrates, namely Tacitus's assertion that Artabanus harboured ambitions in the near East around 35 CE, demanding of Tiberius the treasure left by the exiled Parthian Vonones in Syria and Cilicia.⁴⁷⁶ Further evidence can be seen in the capture of a few villages, presumably west of the Euphrates, by Vardanes in the early 40s and their subsequent return to the Governor of Syria.⁴⁷⁷ Tacitus states that Nero instructed the dependent kings Agrippa II and Antiochus IV of Commagene to invade Parthia in 54/55, albeit presumably as a diversionary tactic for the intended invasion of Armenia.⁴⁷⁸ Tacitus also claims that Vologeses was at one point in 62 CE thinking of invading Syria, until dissuaded by Corbulo's advances,⁴⁷⁹ and Debevoise sees evidence in the writings of Statius of plans by Domitian to enlarge the Empire to the East beyond the Euphrates.⁴⁸⁰ The reality appears to be that none of these plans, if they existed, came to anything.

⁴⁷⁴ Vell. Pat. 2.101.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ann.* 2.58. See also *AJ* 18.53-54.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ann.* 6.31, perhaps echoed in the Adiabene narrative (Vologeses's demands of Izates to hand back rewards bestowed on him by Artabanus (*AJ* 20.82)).

⁴⁷⁷ See Debevoise (1938) p. 169. It is conceivable that Josephus's garbled text (*AJ* 20.71-3) regarding Vardanes's ambitions against Rome may relate to this (see Chapter 2 pp. 29-30).

⁴⁷⁸ *Ann.* 13.7.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ann.* 15.2.

⁴⁸⁰ Debevoise (1938) p. 215. Jones (1992) is more cautious (p. 159 and p. 232 n. 75).

Instead, direct military action between the two empires was confined to a series of proxy wars in Armenia regarding control of the country, where both claimed a natural sphere of influence. Lucius Vitellius, Governor of Syria, persuaded the Iberians to topple Artabanus's son Arsaces and install the Roman puppet Tiridates in 36 CE as King of Armenia, and with Roman approval he seized Mesopotamian towns from Artabanus, before being beaten back to Armenia.⁴⁸¹ According to Josephus, Tiberius then instructed Vitellius to parley with Artabanus on the banks of the Euphrates, following which Artabanus's son Darius was sent to Rome as a hostage.⁴⁸² A half-hearted attempt by Rome to back Meherdates, a rival of the Parthian ruler Gotarzes, for the throne of Parthia in c. 49 CE came to nothing, but it is notable that, in this attempt, Cassius Longinus, Governor of Syria, stopped at the Euphrates, allowing Meherdates to continue with his own troops.⁴⁸³ The Parthian Vologeses's successful attempt to put his brother Tiridates on the throne of Armenia in c. 54 CE⁴⁸⁴ led to the preparation of an expedition under Corbulo to re-conquer Armenia, which was halted by the Parthian evacuation of Armenia.⁴⁸⁵ Tiridates's continual attacks on pro-Roman communities in Armenia eventually led to a full scale Roman invasion of Armenia in 59 CE, the first time that century that Roman troops had in any numbers crossed the Euphrates, with Tiridates being replaced by the Roman puppet ruler Tigranes.⁴⁸⁶ Tigranes's repeated incursions into Parthia and a subsequent invasion of Armenia by Parthia led to a further engagement between Rome and Parthia in Armenia in 62/3 CE, resulting in a diplomatic solution which was concluded in 66 CE,⁴⁸⁷ whereby the Parthian nominee Tiridates was

⁴⁸¹ *Ann.* 6.33-37, 41-44, *AJ* 18.98-100.

⁴⁸² *AJ* 18.101-103. Cassius Dio (59.27) dates this to the reign of Gaius Caligula.

⁴⁸³ *Ann.* 12.10-14.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ann.* 12.50.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ann.* 13.6-9.

⁴⁸⁶ *Ann.* 13.34-41, 14.23-26.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ann.* 15.1-17.

allowed to take the throne, but under the patronage of Nero. No further military conflict, either directly or by proxy, appears to have taken place for the remainder of the century.

In all of this, it is clear that both parties only reluctantly engaged in conflict. Tacitus tells us that Vologeses had ‘an old and deep seated principle to avoid the Roman arms’.⁴⁸⁸ Presumably the readiness with which hostages were given to Rome by the Parthians is evidence of their repeated concern to avoid hostilities.⁴⁸⁹ There are no examples of Roman hostages given to the Parthians, which may indicate reluctance by Roman historians to disclose this or that it was accepted by both sides that Rome was the senior Empire. Even if this is so, the alacrity with which Rome and its commanders repeatedly accepted a negotiated solution, and the political capital made by Nero of his ‘investiture’ of Tiridates, indicates nonetheless a healthy respect for Parthian military prowess.

In fact, the Roman view of Parthia during the last few decades of the first century CE was conditioned not only by political and military interaction with Parthia but also indirectly by relations beforehand between Greeks and Persia stretching back to the Persian conquest of Asia Minor in the latter half of the 6th century. Although it has been argued that the Greek view of Persia immediately following the Greek victory in 479 BCE was not especially negative,⁴⁹⁰ by the 4th Century BCE this had changed to become a view that Persians were servile by nature, perpetuators of an unequal society, seekers after luxury, faithless and cowardly, treacherous and brutal. This was a view put forward by, among others, Isocrates (*Panegyricus* Book 4.150-158), Xenophon (*Cyropaedia* Book 8) and Plato (Book 3, 694a-698a). The reasons put forward for this moral degeneracy were various. Plato believed that the despotic nature of their government was to blame (3.697c-d, 698a), Hippocrates that

⁴⁸⁸ *Ann.* 15.5, trans. Jackson LCL 322.

⁴⁸⁹ See e.g. *Ann.* 2.1, *RG* 32.2, *Ann.* 6.31, 12.10, 13.9, 15.30, Cass. Dio 62.23.4, 63.1.2.

⁴⁹⁰ See for example, Isaac (2004) pp. 274-276, Momigliano (1990) p. 130 and Gruen (2011) pp. 9-21.

‘men who are ruled by princes are the most cowardly’ but Hippocrates also believed that physical geography, and in particular climate, water supply and location have a direct influence on the nature of human beings.⁴⁹¹

Until the latter days of the Roman Republic, there is comparatively little evidence of Roman views of Parthia. Posidonius of Apamea, probably writing around the early part of the first century BCE, continues the Greek theme of denigrating Persian society because of its inequality, albeit Cicero, writing a little later, talks about Babylon and the Persians as ‘those hitherto uninjured and peaceful nations’.⁴⁹² More generally, starting probably around the time of Pacorus’s invasion of Syria in 40 BCE and subsequent defeat, references to Parthia, Parthians and Parthian customs became common in literature, particularly poetry. The themes appear to remain broadly constant over the next one hundred and fifty years and focus on the wild nature of the geography (the snows of the Caucasus and Alborz mountains of Hyrcania) and fauna (Armenian tigers and Hyrcanian hounds) and luxury goods such as perfume, incense and spices, which were increasingly imported from the East.⁴⁹³ Most frequent are the martial references to Parthian horsemen and Parthian bows and, to the Romans, the somewhat cowardly but successful Parthian practice of appearing to retreat and then shooting backwards from their horses; as Ovid remarked: ‘Thou who dost flee to conquer, what, O Parthian, dost thou leave the conquered?’.⁴⁹⁴

The theme of comparing Eastern despotism with western freedom continued throughout the first century. Lucan, writing in the mid-first century CE about the Roman civil wars in the previous century, compares favourably the lot of a Parthian subject to the lives of Romans

⁴⁹¹ Hippoc. *Aer.* 23.

⁴⁹² Cic. *Dom.* 60.

⁴⁹³ See Frye (1981) pp. 255-6. A non-exhaustive list of references is given by Debevoise (1938) pp. 208-211.

⁴⁹⁴ Ov. *Ars am.* 1.209-211, trans. Mozley LCL 252.

at that time ‘kept by the Fates beneath continuous despots’.⁴⁹⁵ The theme is also reflected by Seneca, a contemporary of Lucan,

You, O king, have under you Parthians and Medes and Bactrians, but you hold them in check by fear; they never allow you to relax your bow; they are your bitterest enemies, open to bribes, and eager for a new master.⁴⁹⁶

Lucan also revives the theme of perfidiousness and trickery, in his comparison of Parthian fighting practices and Roman ones.

Their battle is a skirmish, their warfare running away, their squadrons roving, and their soldiers better at giving ground than driving back the enemy; their weapons are bedaubed with tricks, their courage nowhere dares to face fighting at close quarters but only from a distance to stretch the bow-strings and to leave it to the winds to bear their wounds away.⁴⁹⁷

However, both would have been writing around the time of Corbulo’s campaigns against the Parthians, and both may reflect Nero’s war effort⁴⁹⁸ rather than a commonly held view.⁴⁹⁹

We do not know much about relations between Parthia and Rome in the latter decades of the first century, and it is probable that there was a much reduced level of hostilities, perhaps at least in part because of Vespasian’s reorganisation of troops resulting in the reinforcement of the Euphrates as a distinct border.⁵⁰⁰ Vologeses, King of Parthia probably until 80/85 CE, and Vespasian clearly conducted a dialogue which, if not cordial, was at least mutually respectful.⁵⁰¹ Valerius Flaccus, writing under Vespasian, describes in some

⁴⁹⁵ Lucan *Pharsalia* 7.442, trans. Braund (1992).

⁴⁹⁶ Sen. *De Const.* 13.4, trans. Basore LCL 214.

⁴⁹⁷ Lucan *Pharsalia* 8.378, trans. Braund (1992). Seneca too talks of the treacherous Parthians (*Oedipus* 114-119).

⁴⁹⁸ Or possibly his attempts to launch another campaign, whether against the ‘Albani’, per Tacitus (*Hist.* 1.6) or against Parthia itself (see Greatrex (2007) pp. 137-139).

⁴⁹⁹ See Pogorzelsi (2011) pp. 152-153 for arguments regarding alternative dates for the *Pharsalia*.

⁵⁰⁰ See Edwell (2008) pp. 16-20 for details.

⁵⁰¹ During Vespasian’s bid for the Principate in 69 CE, he sent a mission to Armenia and Parthia (*Tac. Hist.* 2.82) and upon his accession, Vologeses appears to have taken the opportunity, in 70 CE, to have sent greetings to Vespasian, with the offer of the use of 40,000 mounted archers, which Vespasian appears to have felt the ability to refuse, but he encouraged Vologeses to enter into a peace treaty with the Senate (*Tac. Hist.* 4.51, *Suet. Vesp.* 6, *Cass. Dio* 65 (66.11.3)). Following the sack of Jerusalem and Titus’s progression through Syria, Vologeses presented Titus with a golden crown in honour of his victory (*BJ* 7.105) and Josephus tells us that in c. 73 CE there may have been an attempt by the ruling family of Rome’s satellite kingdom of

detail in the *Argonautica* (6.690 ff.) the appearance of a Parthian, albeit within the context of the mythical age, as luxurious and effeminate, consorting with eunuchs. However, potentially the author to offer the most revealing insight into how the Romans in the late first century viewed the Parthians is Tacitus. Tacitus writes extensively about Roman military and political engagement with Parthia and Armenia, Rome and Parthia's political football, from 16 CE to 66 CE.⁵⁰² In many respects, he continues to perpetuate the stock views of former generations. The view that the Parthians are a naturally servile race, first articulated by the Greeks, looms large. The absence of a monarch in Parthia makes the people 'ownerless rather than emancipated'.⁵⁰³ Nero's reported speech to Meherdates counsels him to employ Roman ideals of governance rather than his own: 'Let him form the idea not of a despotism and slaves, but a governor and citizens, and practise mercy and justice – qualities unknown to barbarians'.⁵⁰⁴ Martial too joins in this particular chorus: 'Go far away to turbaned Parthians and kiss the soles of gaudy monarchs – base abject suppliants'.⁵⁰⁵ In other words, a slave-like people ruled by slave-like kings.

To continue the inherited theme from 4th century Greece, Parthians are cowardly too. Pompeius Trogus, writing in the Augustan period, tells us that 'the natural disposition of the race is proud, quarrelsome, treacherous and insolent they are excessively prone to lust, but frugal in their diet. They have no interest in the truth or honouring their word, except in so far as it suits their purpose'.⁵⁰⁶ Tacitus continues this theme when he describes Artabanus, as well as being arrogant, cruel and boastful, as also cowardly in hiding, when

Commagene to transfer Commagene's allegiance from Rome to Parthia (*BJ* 7.219-221, 7.236-7), following which Vologeses seems to have been persuaded to act as peacemaker between the two parties.

⁵⁰² *Ann.* 2.1-4, 2.56-58, 2.68, 6.31-37, 6.41-44, 11.8-10, 12.10-14, 12.44-51, 13.6-9, 13.34-41, 14.23-26, 15.1-18, 15.24-31.

⁵⁰³ *Ann.* 2.4.

⁵⁰⁴ *Ann.* 12.11, trans. Jackson LCL 312.

⁵⁰⁵ *Mart.* 10.72.5-7.

⁵⁰⁶ Pompeius Trogus 41.3-10. Author's translation.

‘his terrified expectation of treachery’ when greeting a delegation of Parthian nobles, gave way to relief at their friendly intentions.⁵⁰⁷

Tacitus’s most constant theme, however, is one of Parthian treachery, continuing a theme throughout the Romans’ engagement with Parthia.⁵⁰⁸ The Arsacid brothers Gotarzes and Vardanes ally in the face of treachery by their nobles⁵⁰⁹ and Vardanes is ultimately a victim of such treachery,⁵¹⁰ Izates of Adiabene is treacherous to the Roman cause,⁵¹¹ Armenians are a nation of traitors⁵¹² and Corbulo is concerned about ‘barbarian treachery’.⁵¹³ Plutarch, Tacitus’s contemporary, also views the Parthians as ‘a most treacherous race’.⁵¹⁴ Perhaps the most pithy of Tacitus’s invective comes through his description of Corbulo’s view of the Parthian: ‘gnarus facilem mutatu gentem, ut segnem ad pericula ita infidam ad occasiones (knowing them to be a fickle people, as lazy to confront danger as they are treacherous, given the opportunity)’, thus neatly combining treachery, cowardice, inconstancy and stupidity in a single phrase.⁵¹⁵

Much of this echoes previous generations and is not exclusive to Parthians. Deceitfulness is seen to be a common characteristic of almost all non-Romans.⁵¹⁶ In Tacitus’s Parthian passages, these stock phrases are introduced to contrast with the (usually) opposing Roman values, and perhaps their decline. Slavery and slavishness are antithetical to *libertas*. Luxury is abhorrent to the simple life of the idealised Roman forebears. Sexual deviancy runs

⁵⁰⁷ *Ann.* 6.43.

⁵⁰⁸ Horace talks about the ‘faithless’ Parthians (*Odes* 4.15.23), in turn reiterating the excuses made for the defeat of Crassus and Antony.

⁵⁰⁹ *Ann.* 11.9.

⁵¹⁰ *Ann.* 11.10.

⁵¹¹ *Ann.* 12.13–14.

⁵¹² *Ann.* 12.46, 50.

⁵¹³ *Ann.* 13.35, 38.

⁵¹⁴ *Plut. Vit. Pomp.* 76.5.

⁵¹⁵ *Ann.* 14.23, author’s translation. Vologeses is apparently stupid, preferring the trappings of power to its substance (*Ann.* 15.31).

⁵¹⁶ See Isaac (2004) p. 376 n. 34.

contrary to the Roman virtues of chastity and restraint. And yet, unless these stock phrases were at least in some way representative of what people thought, Tacitus would fail in his purpose.

However, at the same time, Tacitus cannot help revealing, as his literary forebears did, an ambivalence of attitude towards Parthia and Parthians not present in respect of other nations. In the first instance Tacitus allows that Parthia can have a view of Rome that is both sophisticated and derogatory. In three separate passages, we are told that Parthians despised what they saw as the decadence of life at Rome, in almost a mirror image of the stock Roman view of Parthia.⁵¹⁷ Vonones, the Roman nominated ruler of Parthia, is viewed with contempt by the Parthians because from his previous life as a hostage in Rome he had adopted what was seen as a 'soft' Roman lifestyle.⁵¹⁸ Another Roman Arsacid 'hostage', Phraates, was so enfeebled by his life at Rome that 'he proved unequal to the customs of his fatherland and was taken off by disease'.⁵¹⁹ In addition, Phraates's Roman backed successor, Tiridates, presumably yet another hostage, is described by Artabanus as 'a weakling whose foreign effeminacy unfitted him for the sword'.⁵²⁰

In addition, the uncomfortable Roman admiration for Parthian martial skill and valour is also present in Tacitus who, like many before him, acknowledges the magnitude of the Parthian victories over Crassus and Antony. Tiridates, Vologeses's brother and ruler of Armenia, talks of an Arsacid 'valour and fortune which had several times already been demonstrated by a Roman disaster'.⁵²¹ Tacitus is primarily creating here a contrast between

⁵¹⁷ An echo of Herodotus, some five centuries earlier, who allows the fact that, in their own eyes, the Persians 'deem themselves to be in all regards by far the best of all men' (1.134) (trans. Godley LCL 117).

⁵¹⁸ *Ann.* 2.2.

⁵¹⁹ *Ann.* 6.32.

⁵²⁰ *Ann.* 6.43.

⁵²¹ *Ann.* 13.37.

the earlier failures of Crassus and Antony and the successes of Corbulo, but, even so, he acknowledges that these were far from complete or convincing.

This grudgingly accepted military parity is combined by Tacitus with physical descriptions of war-like Parthians as virile handsome men in a way that sits uneasily with a continuation of the Augustan theme of the good-looking but subservient oriental. The Mede (interchangeable with Parthian in Roman literature, if not ethnographically accurate) Ariobarzanes is installed as ruler of Armenia, ‘to whose good looks and brilliant qualities the Armenians raised no objection’,⁵²² and the Iberian prince and warrior Pharasmanes was tall and handsome.⁵²³ This combination of good looks, apparent effeminacy and fighting skill was deeply challenging to Roman ethnic prejudice. As Plutarch writes of Surens, the conqueror of Crassus: ‘the tallest and the fairest of them all, although his effeminate beauty did not well correspond to his reputation for valour’.⁵²⁴

The totally disproportionate celebrations by Nero in respect of the surrender of the Armenian town of Artaxata, are cynically recorded by Tacitus⁵²⁵ and the truce declared between Corbulo and Vologeses in 63 CE and the Romans’ retreat to west of the Euphrates leads Tacitus to comment that ‘the gods ... had transferred the ownership [of Armenia] to Parthia, not without some humiliation to Rome’ leaving Rome, in the view of Nero’s council with ‘the choice between a hazardous war and ignominious peace’.⁵²⁶ Ultimately, peace was chosen, dressed up as Roman sovereignty over an apparently submissive Tiridates, but there can have been little doubt that this was not as a result of Roman military supremacy.

⁵²² *Ann.* 2.4.

⁵²³ *Ann.* 12.44.

⁵²⁴ *Plut. Vit. Crass.* 24.2, trans. Perrin LCL 65.

⁵²⁵ *Ann.* 13.41.

⁵²⁶ *Ann.* 15.24-5.

In conclusion, it is clear that, without any particular factual basis, the Romans inherited the fourth century Greek stereotype of the Parthian, as being naturally slavish, luxuriant, faithless and cowardly. In addition to these characteristics, the Romans seemed to have added that of effeminacy and addiction to vice. The problem with this analysis is that it did not sit well with reality. It is interesting that the Augustan propaganda focuses on submission, almost to the exclusion of any other attribute. There is good reason for this. The Romans had suffered a series of, for them, shocking military defeats which, in spite of the Augustan (and later Neronian) propaganda, were never avenged, merely negated politically.⁵²⁷ A nation that apparently suffered all these un-Roman character defects was nonetheless at worst an equal, militarily, for Rome. The more these un-Roman attributes were emphasised, the worse Rome looked in its inability to triumph over such a people. Such was the dichotomy that presented itself.

The solution appears to be a kind of national schizophrenia, exemplified by Tacitus. All the old canards are trotted out, some perhaps almost unconsciously, some useful to serve a particular Tacitean message. But there is another side to Parthians as well. Qualities of bravery rather than cowardice are displayed by Artabanus, much of the faithlessness displayed comes from Rome or its allies, and it is the urban sophistication of Rome that is redolent of unmanliness, rather than the hard-drinking, horse-riding lifestyle of the aristocratic handsome Parthian.

It is into this background that the Adiabene narrative needs to be placed.

⁵²⁷ Florus, writing in the first half of the second century, makes it clear that Parthia was not subject to Rome, even if their treaty might make it seem that 'they repented of their victory' (Flor. 1.40.31, 2.34.63-64).

Chapter 5

The Adiabene narrative within the context of the *Jewish Antiquities*

5.1. Introduction

It is clear from the analysis of the *Antiquities* in Chapter 3. *The literary context of the Adiabene narrative* that Josephus's purpose was both to present the Jewish God as all-powerful, rewarding piety and punishing wickedness, and also to portray followers of the Jewish God as respectable and Jewish heroes as conforming to the norms expected of Greco-Roman ones. It is also clear from Chapter 2. *The outline of the Adiabene narrative* that Josephus has moulded the Adiabene narrative to present someone ostensibly heroic who, while not born a Jew, nonetheless embraces the Jewish God, manifests piety, and in turn is rewarded with assistance to vanquish his foes, no matter how lost the cause appears to be.

This chapter is structured to show first the Adiabene narrative's similarities with other themes in the *Antiquities* and then dissimilarities and is presented in six sections. In terms of similarities, firstly Josephus's shaping of Izates as hero is examined, following which an analysis of Izates's rewards from God for his piety is presented. An examination of Josephus's selective use of history in the narrative is then made, together with an analysis of other connections between the Adiabene narrative and the rest of the *Antiquities*. Some dissimilarities with the *Antiquities* are then shown, together with some possible explanations. Lastly, the role of God in the narrative is examined, showing both similarities and dissimilarities with the rest of the work. Through the examination of these topics, it is then possible to assess what Josephus wished to impart to the reader of the narrative and why he wished to impart it. As will be shown, the narrative, although it appears at first

glance to sit oddly in Book 20 within an otherwise largely chronological exposition of events in Judaea between the procuratorships of Fadus and Albinus (44 to 64 CE), in fact for the most part forms a very strong link between Book 20 and the other books that precede it.

5.2. Reinforcing the messages of the *Antiquities*

For the most part, it can be seen that Josephus's crafting of the Adiabene narrative is designed to reinforce his messages elsewhere in the *Antiquities*. He does this in essentially three ways. Firstly by creating a hero in the biblical mould, which in turn reinforces his message that Jewish heroes possess the same admirable qualities as Greco-Roman ones, and that such heroes benefit from God's pronoia. Secondly, by a distortion of Parthian history which turns what we otherwise know from Tacitus and Cassius Dio to be Adiabenean enmity to Rome into respect for and alliance with Rome, a continuous theme of the *Antiquities*. Thirdly by reintroducing common themes of the *Antiquities* to emphasise the continuity of the work.

5.2.1 Izates as hero

It is particularly important for Josephus to establish a picture of Izates in the mind's eye of the reader that shows Izates to be a man of heroic qualities, so as to continue one of the dominant themes of the *Antiquities* as a whole, as analysed in Chapter 3, namely that Jews can be people of substance. He attempts to do this in much the same way as he presents biblical leaders of the ancient Israelites, namely through imbuing their life story and person with facts indicating nobility and their character with traits associated by his readers with heroic qualities. The table in Appendix 1 shows, against the criteria discussed in Chapter 3, how Josephus describes the leaders of the Jewish people in the first 11 books of the

Antiquities, and compares Izates's qualities against those Jewish leaders. In fact, what is perhaps surprising is that, compared with biblical heroes, Izates is seen as complete a hero as any of the patriarchs and subsequent leaders of the Jewish people.

However, Josephus is somewhat more subtle in his portrait of Izates than in his earlier descriptions of Biblical heroes, many of whose obviously admirable characteristics are stated directly by Josephus. In contrast, in the case of Izates, many of these characteristics have to be inferred from the narrative; to do otherwise would run the risk of portraying Izates as comparably holy to the biblical leaders.

In the first instance, Josephus establishes Izates as a man of consequence, by showing his breeding, personal characteristics and wealth. From the very beginning of the narrative (20.17), we know that Izates is royalty, son of in fact two royal parents. Josephus's view of the importance of breeding, of γένος, can be seen from the *Vita* where Josephus himself tells the reader that he was of royal blood as well as a priestly lineage (*Vita* 2). Elsewhere in the *Antiquities*, many of the Jewish biblical heroes have their lineage given prominent mention, some with extra-biblical detail.⁵²⁸

Izates's birth has a miraculous element when his father hears a voice in a dream prophesying Izates's future (20.18-19). Such a dream immediately establishes Izates as someone special, in line with other heroes of the Biblical world, whose birth was heralded by a portentous dream.⁵²⁹ It is however notable that the future is couched not in terms of greatness or fame, but that, with the providence of God (θεοῦ προνοία), Izates would have

⁵²⁸ For a list of those biblical characters whose birth has been elevated, see Feldman (1998a) p. 546.

⁵²⁹ Gnuse (1996) gives several examples of biblical portents of children's future greatness delivered by God or a divine messenger, for example Samson's mother was visited by an angel (*AJ* 5.277), albeit he believes that 'in several respects, such as the use of the word φωνή (*AJ* 20.18-19), the dream report of Monobazus stands by itself in the Josephan collection' (p. 197). A notably similar example elsewhere in the *Antiquities* is the extra-biblical story of Amram's dream of his future son Moses's greatness (*AJ* 2.210-216). For examples in the Greco-Roman world, see Chapter 7 pp. 207-210.

‘a happy start and would also attain a fortunate end’ (ἀρχῆς τυχὸν καὶ τέλους εὐτυχοῦς τευξόμενον). It is clear to the reader therefore that, even at this early point, the message will be relatively unconventional.

His precociousness and attractive personality are also in evidence early on in the narrative. We are told that his father favoured him over his brothers (20.20),⁵³⁰ that he was viewed with goodwill (εὐνοία) by Abennerigus, King of Charax (20.23) and that, even at an early age, his father made him Governor of Carron (20.24). In addition, he had at his disposal considerable wealth (a sign of human worth or value in the Greco-Roman world and thus displayed also by biblical heroes) as a result of his father-in-law’s grant of land in Charax (20.23) and his possession of Carron in Adiabene. The nobles, when summoned by Helena after Monobazus I’s death, believe him to be justly preferred over his brothers for succession (20.28), as one and all had prayed for in their hearts. Josephus seems therefore to be emphasising both his personality and his right to succession. It is however interesting that, before Izates becomes king, Josephus does not directly tell us what exactly Izates’s qualities are that make him so popular. Later in the narrative, the impression of his wealth is reinforced through the description of his donation to Helena’s charitable efforts to relieve famine in Jerusalem (20.50) and his own direct contribution (20.53), along with Josephus’s mention of the banquets that he gave (20.61), his bed of gold (20.67) and further acquisition of territory, the district of Nisibis, from a grateful Artabanus.

Josephus also reinforces his message by associating the Greco-Roman cardinal virtues of σοφία, σωφροσύνη, ἀνδρεία, δικαιοσύνη and εὐσέβεια with his Jewish hero, as he has done

⁵³⁰ As though he were an only child (μονογενῆ), which might remind the reader of Abraham’s relationship with Isaac, also described by Josephus as μονογενῆ (AJ 2.222). See Winter (1953) for other Old Testament examples.

with other, particularly biblical, ones as shown in Chapter 3.⁵³¹ Izates displays σοφία and σωφροσύνη consistently throughout the narrative. Notwithstanding that he was younger than his brother Monobazus, he was deemed worthy by his father of kingship, and his decision not to kill his half-brothers on becoming king but to send them away as hostages shows judgement (20.37). His humility⁵³² and faithfulness (Izates says this about himself, if only to emphasise the point) in front of Artabanus, his liege king, further illustrates this (20.56-61),⁵³³ as does the respect that the Parthians showed him in allowing him to mediate between Artabanus and the usurper Cinnamus (20.62-63). He is clearly a man of his word, as his right hand and oaths are deemed sufficient by the Parthian rebels as a guarantee of forbearance from retribution.⁵³⁴ He also possesses σωφροσύνη in his consideration of foreign policy towards Rome, as he ‘knew well the might and fortune of the Romans’ (20.70)⁵³⁵ and viewed that war with Rome would imperil his family, who were currently residing in Jerusalem, under Roman rule (20.71). His σωφροσύνη also allows him to realise the danger of weakness in front of Vologeses and the prudence of putting his wife and children out of harm’s way before military engagement with the Parthian (20.83-5).

Izates also displays ἀνδρεία, most notably in his decision to undergo circumcision, notwithstanding the danger that would result, due to his subjects’ hostility. Moreover, he is not ‘panic stricken’ (οὐ κατεπλάγη)⁵³⁶ at his nobles’ revolt and slew a great number of

⁵³¹ See pp. 49-51. For further discussion of cardinal virtues in the Greco-Roman world, see Chapter 7 pp. 200-201.

⁵³² A quality Josephus sees as closely related to σωφροσύνη (6.63).

⁵³³ In this respect he appears to share this quality with Moses (3.74, 3.212, 4.317), Samson (5.302) and Saul (6.63).

⁵³⁴ C.f. *AJ* 18.328. On this occasion it is Artabanus who gives his right hand and oaths to the Jewish brigands Asinaeus and Anilaeus.

⁵³⁵ The similarity with Agrippa’s speech in the *Jewish War* (*BJ* 2.345-401) to the Jerusalemites to abandon resistance against Rome in 66 CE is not coincidental. In particular, compare Izates’s words with Agrippa’s claim that Fortune (τύχη) has bestowed its favours on Rome (*BJ* 2.360), that the Gauls ‘are overawed by the might and Fortune of Rome’ (μετὰ τῆς δυνάμεως Ῥωμαίων καὶ τὴν τύχην καταπλάγνεντες) (*BJ* 2.373) and that Egypt’s riches are not a match for the Fortune of Rome (*BJ* 2.387).

⁵³⁶ A stock phrase of Josephus, often used to introduce the bravery of the relevant individual see e.g. Jonathan before Saul (6.127), Saul of impending death (6.348), David against the Ammanites (7.122), Judas and Jonathan the Hasmonaeans against their enemies (12.372, 13.94).

Arabs (20.79-80). He also shows bravery in resisting Vologeses against what appears to be overwhelming odds. Izates shows δικαιοσύνη too, Josephus introducing this aspect of his character by the use of δικαίως to illustrate Izates's elevation over Monobazus for the kingdom. Izates is seen to possess δικαιοσύνη in his support for Artabanus (20.59) and for his execution of the guilty nobles (20.79), as well as rewarding Monobazus's loyalty by making him his successor (20.93).

Lastly, and for Josephus most importantly, Izates displays εὐσέβεια at every point in the narrative. Josephus provides an early introduction, by showing Izates as viewing the strategy advocated by his supporters to kill his rival kinsman as ἀσέβες (20.37). It then becomes clear that the moral of the circumcision episode is that his desire to be circumcised is an expression of piety; Eleazar calls his uncircumcised state an ἀσέβεια (20.45). Josephus emphasises the point in his summary of the narrative when he states that Izates's future salvation is 'the reward of piety' (20.48).

We then see further examples of Izates's piety. Izates is seen in the next section (20.49-53) to be the object of admiration in all men's eyes (παρὰ πᾶσι ζηλωτὸν), because of the *pronoia* that God gave him, impliedly because of his piety. He is enthusiastic for his mother's trip to Jerusalem (20.50)⁵³⁷ and he himself sends money (20.53), with Josephus rounding off this part of the narrative by alluding to other good deeds of the royal pair. We are also told that he sent five sons to Jerusalem (20.71) and that his pious worship (τὴν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσέβειαν) encouraged his brother Monobazus to become a Jew (20.75). The denouement of the narrative, the confrontation with Vologeses, is also an opportunity for

⁵³⁷ It is also interesting that Helena decides to go to Jerusalem and to worship at τὸ ἱερὸν τοῦ θεοῦ (20.49). In all but one other case in the *Antiquities*, Josephus feels no need to qualify τὸ ἱερὸν or ὁ ναὸς by τοῦ θεοῦ. In the only other case, *AJ* 18.8, he talks emotionally about the Temple of God being ravaged by fire in 70 CE and it is possible that the qualifier here is to emphasise the holiness of the place and her (and therefore Izates's) pious actions.

Josephus to display Izates's piety. Izates supplicates God's favour by genuflecting, rubbing his head with ashes and fasting in a time honoured Jewish manner,⁵³⁸ and calls upon God (ὦ δέσποτα κύριε) not to protect him, but to protect God's status as the 'first and rightful Lord of all' (20.89-91). Lastly, in the postscript, Helena describes her son as 'most pious' (εὐσεβεστάτου)⁵³⁹ and he and his mother are buried in pyramid tombs outside Jerusalem (20.95).⁵⁴⁰

So far, the analysis of Izates has shown that Izates displays the same personal heroic characteristics as biblical heroes. There are, in addition, features of the narrative that assist in specifically tying Izates into biblical heroes, so as to reinforce his Jewish identity. In the first instance, it is clear that Josephus describes the manner in which Izates prepares himself for prayer in a way which makes the reader relate Izates to earlier Jewish heroes (20.89). David dons sackcloth and throws himself on the ground, beseeching God to spare the life of Bathsheba's child (7.154) and also to avert the plague from Jerusalem (7.327). Solomon throws himself on the ground, when praying to God to bless the Temple (8.118). Ezra too rent his clothes, tore his hair and threw himself on the ground in supplication to God (11.141), Esther threw herself on the ground, put on mourner's dress and refused all food and drink and comforts, begging God to take pity on her (11.231-2), and Judas the Hasmonaean made supplication to God for victory against Lysias's forces by dressing in sackcloth, a usual Hebrew custom, as Josephus tells his reader 'in time of great danger to constrain Him to grant them victory over their foes' (12.300).⁵⁴¹ Yet again, Josephus

⁵³⁸ As, for example does Hezekiah (*AJ* 10.11) and Daniel (*Dan* 9:3, but curiously not Josephus's version in *AJ* 10).

⁵³⁹ A rare word in the superlative form in Josephus's *Antiquities* found only in *AJ* 15.384 (used by Herod to describe his rebuilding of the Temple) and in *AJ* 20.12 (used by Claudius to describe Agrippa II, Josephus's correspondent regarding the Jewish War and claimed friend (*Vita* 362, 364-366)).

⁵⁴⁰ An echo perhaps of Simon the Hasmonaean's piety in building seven pyramids for his parents and brothers (13.211).

⁵⁴¹ According to I Macc 3:47, like Izates, they put on sackcloth and sprinkled ashes on their heads and tore their clothes.

presents his reader with imagery that specifically invites comparison with Jewish biblical and other heroes.

Even more coincident with Izates's experience, Hezekiah, when faced with Sennacherib's siege of Jerusalem and the boastful threats from the Assyrian general Rabshakeh, put on sackcloth and beseeched God's help,⁵⁴² whereupon, like Vologeses, Sennacherib abandoned his attack in the face of danger elsewhere in his kingdom.⁵⁴³ However, the parallels between the two passages should not be seen as pointing to Hezekiah as a specific role model for Izates.⁵⁴⁴ Hezekiah is not alone by any means among Biblical heroes in illustrating the Josephan leitmotif that piety gains God's protection. The coincidence of the manner of salvation is interesting, and probably yet another hook into the first eleven books of the *Antiquities*, but no more than that. In particular, Hezekiah is described as a coward in not meeting Sennacherib's emissaries (10.5), an unscriptural detail, and behaviour very different from that of Izates.

5.2.2 Izates's rewards from God for his piety

As has been shown in Chapter 3, the Jewish God requires specific attributes from individuals in order to provide his bounty. It therefore follows that Izates's possession of such characteristics similarly enables Josephus to demonstrate the just rewards that follow. There is a subtle link to God's munificence early in the narrative, when Izates's receipt of Carron as a gift enables Josephus, as an aside, to mention the district as the final resting

⁵⁴² 2 Kgs 18:19-35, 19:1-20, 2 Chr 32:10-15, Isa 37:10-20. As Barish (1983) p. 64 shows, the form of prayer in *AJ* 20.90 closely resembles the prayer in 2 Kings and Isaiah, albeit the prayer is condensed into a few words of reported speech in Josephus's *Antiquities* (*AJ* 10.11, 16), along the lines of Chronicles. The passage in the Adiabene narrative also echoes that of Judith (Jdt 6:2-9), where Holofernes is similarly boastful.

⁵⁴³ Similarly Jerusalem's deliverance from Lysias in 162 BCE, due to Lysias's more pressing engagement (1 Macc 6:55-63).

⁵⁴⁴ Contra Marciak (2011) pp. 80-82, who believes that Izates is modelled on Hezekiah.

place of Noah's Ark, thus neatly linking back to the beginning of the *Antiquities* (1.90-92) and an early display of God's help to those deserving of it.⁵⁴⁵

More directly, as a conclusion to the conversion element of the narrative (20.38-48), Josephus points the way to the remainder of the narrative when he states that

It was God who was to prevent their fears from being realised. For although Izates himself and his children were often threatened with destruction, God preserved them,⁵⁴⁶ opening a path to safety from desperate straits. God thus demonstrated that those who fix their eyes on Him and trust in him alone do not lose the rewards of their piety' (20.48).⁵⁴⁷

The remainder of the narrative displays the benefits obtained from following the one God, in much the same way as Josephus's biblical narratives.

Πρόνοια, God's providence, critical in the preceding 19 books, plays a crucial role throughout the Adiabene narrative. Josephus guides us to its importance in his opening paragraphs when he states that Izates will have a fortunate life by God's providence (θεοῦ προνοίᾳ) (20.18).⁵⁴⁸ At the transition of the narrative from the 'conversion' element to the description of the benefits of conversion (20.48-49), Izates is well loved by all, thanks to God's providence (διὰ τὴν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ πρόνοιαν) (20.49).⁵⁴⁹ Finally, at the denouement of the narrative, Izates's escape from Vologeses is thanks to the providence of God (20.91). It is also possible that Josephus sought to emphasise this aspect of the narrative by use of

⁵⁴⁵ See Barish (1983) pp. 67-70 for an analysis of the comparable language in the two passages.

⁵⁴⁶ The Greek διέσωσεν might remind the reader of Noah, whom God similarly saved (1.78, repeated 20.25).

⁵⁴⁷ Words echoing David, who also put his trust in God (τῷ δὲ θεῷ πεποιθώς) (7.122).

⁵⁴⁸ That the baby is called Izates is taken by Feldman to relate to an Iranian word *yazata* with godly connotations (Feldman LCL 456 p. 13 note a). Like Samson, Izates's birth is presaged by the supernatural, and an angel visits his mother to tell her of the impending birth of a son who, by God's providence, would be a hero (5.277). Like Solomon (7.338), Izates was chosen for God's providence before he was born.

⁵⁴⁹ Feldman (LCL 456) chooses to translate this phrase as 'thanks to the prudence that God gave him', presumably using the most usual alternative meaning of πρόνοια (and the meaning that should be applied to its use in paragraph 20.57 (καὶ κοινὴν εἶναι νόμισον καὶ ὑπὲρ σαυτοῦ πρόνοιαν)) on account of the use of the preposition ἐκ. It is certainly the case that Josephus almost invariably uses θεός in the genitive case *without* preposition when describing God's providence. However, there is one other example in the *Antiquities* of use of a preposition to describe undoubtedly God-given help and providence (παρὰ in 7.245, relating to David's victory against Absalom) and, conversely, were this to be translated as *prudence*, it would be the only example in the *Antiquities* of the use of πρόνοια meaning prudence where the word is coupled with θεός. Schiffman (1998) p. 179 translates it as God's providence.

εὐνοία, when describing Abennerigus's feelings for Izates (20.23), implicitly contrasting the earthly with the heavenly, and also, in describing Izates's meeting with Artabanus, using πρόνοια in the phrase 'consider that forethought for me is forethought for you also' (κοινήν εἶναι νόμισον καὶ ὑπὲρ σουτοῦ πρόνοιαν) (20.57).

As in the preceding volumes of the *Antiquities*, Josephus is also keen to point out the omnipotence of the Jewish God. It was God who cut short Vardanes's expectations of advantage from opposing Izates (20.72) and God who delivered the rebellious nobles to Izates (20.81). Izates decides, before the confrontation with Vologeses, to commit himself to God the Protector (τῷ κηδεμόνι) (20.84)⁵⁵⁰ and the message is clear from the climax to the story, Izates's prayer to God before battle with Vologeses, that 'God is mightier than all mankind' (20.89)⁵⁵¹ and that it was because of the Parthian's hubristic challenge to God's power that Izates prayed for God's intervention (20.90).

It is also notable that Josephus uses the word σύμμαχος, as he does frequently in his biblical restatement, to describe God in the Adiabene narrative. He sets this up this by describing Izates as the friend and ally of Artabanus (φίλον δέ με καὶ σύμμαχον εὐρήσεις) (20.59). The use of the word then switches from temporal to spiritual. God is described as 'the greatest of allies' (20.85) and Izates hopes that God will come as his ally against Vologeses (20.90). As has been pointed out in Chapter 3, God as ally and protector is a constant theme in the previous 19 books. In particular, David's defiance of Goliath uses metaphors that relate very closely to Izates's situation. For David, 'all men shall learn that Hebrews have

⁵⁵⁰ An appellation of God used by David (7.380) and by Josephus of Moses as the protector of the Jewish people (3.98). See Feldman (1998b) p. 302. See also *BJ* 3.387, when Josephus describes his own desperate circumstances in the caves near Jotapata, and, trusting in God's protection, he suggests the drawing of lots to determine the order in which he and his companions would kill themselves.

⁵⁵¹ Note the subtle build-up given in the herald's boastful words that 'not even (καὶ ... οὐδὲ) Izates's God could save him' (20.88).

the Deity for their protection, and that He in His care for us is our armour and strength, and that all other armament and force are unavailing where God is not' (6.187).⁵⁵²

Similarly, the reward of εὐδαιμονία, a critical part of Josephus's biblical narrative, reappears here. The prophecy of Izates's fortunate life (20.18) has already been mentioned and Josephus reinforces this soon after in the narrative, when his mother Helena inviting her nobles to choose Izates as successor to his father, proposes that 'he is blessed (μακάριος, a synonym for εὐδαίμων)⁵⁵³ who receives his realm from the hands not of one but of many who willingly give their consent' (20.27).⁵⁵⁴

Similarly, Helena sees Izates as τὸν δὲ υἱὸν αὐτῆς μακάριον (20.49). It is also in this context that Josephus's statement regarding Izates's 24 sons and 24 daughters in 20.92 should be viewed. The number 24 is probably not important in itself,⁵⁵⁵ but the multiplicity of children, for Josephus, is clear evidence of the blessings that flowed to Izates. Numerous characters in the retelling of the Bible have large numbers of children, of whom one, the relatively obscure Israelite leader Jair the Gileadite was 'a man in all ways blessed, and chiefly in his progeny of valiant sons, thirty in number' (5.254).⁵⁵⁶ Not only is Izates blessed but, yet again, there is a link to biblical characters.

⁵⁵² Trans. Thackeray and Marcus LCL 490.

⁵⁵³ See for example 1.42 μακάριον βίον – Adam & Eve; 8.120 ἔσεσθαι γὰρ οὕτως εὐδαίμων τὸ Ἑβραίων ἔθνος καὶ παντὸς ἀνθρώπων γένους μακαριώτερον (thus would the Hebrew nation be happy and the most blessed of all races of men); 12.303 καὶ τὸν εὐδαίμονα καὶ μακάριον βίον (Judas exhorts his troops).

⁵⁵⁴ This is an interesting if opaque comment, reminiscent of numerous comments earlier in the *Antiquities* that the ideal form of government is aristocracy, rather than kingship (see e.g. 1.5, 4.223, 6.36, 11.111 and Mason (2004) pp. xxvi-xxviii). The sentiment here seems to accord with a wider Josephan framework of an aristocratic politeia.

⁵⁵⁵ Feldman LCL 456 p. 49 note b lists numerous Biblical and Talmudic examples of the number 24 occurring, but it is not obvious what relevance any of these have to the Adiabene narrative.

⁵⁵⁶ Other examples of large numbers of offspring include Gideon – 70 sons in wedlock (5.233), Ibzan – 30 sons and 30 daughters (5.271), Abdon – 40 sons and 30 grandsons (5.273), Rehoboam – 28 sons and 60 daughters (8.250), Ahab – 70 sons (9.125).

5.3. Josephus's selective use of history in the narrative

For the most part, when comparing Josephus's account of Parthian history with those of other Greco-Roman historians, there are relatively few differences. There are, however, three striking omissions. Firstly, in describing the rejection by the Parthians of Vonones, intended by Rome as the puppet ruler of Parthia, and their acceptance of Artabanus, Josephus and Tacitus agree that the Parthians are a proud race and felt uneasy about accepting one who had been a hostage in, and therefore subject to, Rome, both thereby establishing Parthian credentials as strong and worthy enemies of Rome. However, Josephus does not mention that which Tacitus does, namely that the Parthians also scorned the Roman way of life as somewhat sedentary and un-virile.⁵⁵⁷

Secondly, Tacitus's description of the role of Izates in secretly supporting Gotarzes and his hostility to the Roman backed pretender Meherdates in 49 CE, while ostensibly being on the side of Rome, is absent from Josephus's Adiabene narrative, which has Izates articulating a strategy of coexistence with, rather than opposition to, Rome.⁵⁵⁸ Thirdly, Tacitus and Cassius Dio tell at some length of Vologeses's and his brother Tiridates's role in supporting Monobazus to repel the invasion of Adiabene by Tigranes, the Roman puppet ruler of Armenia, in 61 CE, and Monobazus's subsequent support of Tiridates's ultimately unsuccessful invasion of Armenia, resulting in a peace treaty between Vologeses and the Roman general Corbulo in 63 CE.⁵⁵⁹ This rather different view of Adiabenean sympathies plays no part in Josephus's narrative of events in the early 60s later in Book 20. It is conceivable that Josephus may have simply been unaware of the full reasons for Vonones's unpopularity, but it is unlikely that Izates's and Monobazus's roles against Rome would not

⁵⁵⁷ Tac. *Ann.* 2.1-5, AJ 18.47.

⁵⁵⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 12.13-14, AJ 20.70-71.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ann.* 15.1-18, Cass. Dio 62.19-23. It is interesting that neither Tacitus nor Cassius Dio mention that the Adiabene royal family were Jews.

have been disclosed by the same source or sources from which Josephus drew the Adiabene narrative itself.

It is therefore likely that Josephus is deliberately selective in the Adiabene narrative in his presentation of first century relations between Parthia and Rome and the role played by Adiabene, and omits and includes for a particular purpose or purposes. In the first instance, Josephus seems extremely keen to present Adiabeniens in if not a pro-Roman light, then at least not an anti-Roman one, either militarily or culturally. This conforms with one of the key messages of the *Antiquities*, namely that Jews were not hostile to Rome. As has been discussed above, Josephus is at pains to present Izates in 20.70-71 as clearly no threat to Rome.

Secondly, it would appear that an attempt is made to portray Artabanus throughout the *Antiquities* as both a strong and honourable leader, perhaps against a military history that might encourage Romans to believe the national characteristic was opposite, and Tacitus may do no more than echo popular sentiment when he claims that ‘disloyalty was their national habit’.⁵⁶⁰

5.4. Other connections between the Adiabene narrative and the *Jewish Antiquities*

It has been shown in Chapter 3 that Josephus links all 20 books of the *Antiquities* through not only the major themes of the Jewish God’s all-powerful being and the respectability of the Jewish people and their leaders, but also through a series of motifs which reoccur in the text. The Adiabene narrative is no exception.

⁵⁶⁰ Ann 12.14, trans. Michael Grant, Penguin, 1956.

5.4.1 Josephus and fraternal jealousy

It has been suggested that there are specific parallels between Izates in the Adiabene narrative and the biblical Joseph and their respective relations with their brothers.⁵⁶¹ It is true that both Joseph and Izates are their father's favourite, engendering jealousy and hatred (φθόρος καὶ μῖσος) (2.10) amongst their brothers, both stories have dreams of good fortune and have the threat of death hanging over their heroes, and both protagonists display magnanimity to their brothers when in a position of power and are useful to their non-Jewish overlords. However, the parallels should be seen within a wider context, where Josephus often uses fraternal discord to display narrative tension and drama. The Tobiad Hyrcanus, similarly a *wunderkind*, generates jealousy and hatred from his brothers, who attempt to have him killed (12.190-202).⁵⁶² Like Monobazus, Hyrcanus's father Joseph loved his favourite son as if he were an only son (12.195). Aristobulus, the Hasmonaean ruler, kept all his brothers except Antigonus in chains (13.302) and Herod's son Antipater's plots to dispose of his half-brothers and potential rivals form a substantial element in Josephus's lengthy Herodian narrative. Outside Judaea, the Parthian prince Phraataces is assisted in his attempt to seize the throne from his father by his father sending his siblings to Rome as hostages (18.42).

5.4.2 Moralising in the Adiabene narrative

Josephus is clear what message the reader should take away from the Adiabene narrative, namely that 'God thus demonstrated that those who fix their eyes on Him and trust in Him alone do not lose the reward of their piety' (20.48). The message is not confined to the Adiabene narrative alone, but forms a constantly recurring leitmotif and is the subject of Josephus's frequent moralising asides. The reader first encounters this message in the

⁵⁶¹ Marciak (2014) p. 122.

⁵⁶² A similarity remarked upon by Wills (1995) pp. 206-211.

Antiquities in the proem to the twenty books. Josephus tells us that ‘the main lesson to be learnt from this history ... is that men who conform to the will of God ... prosper in all things beyond belief’ (1.14) and that ‘God ... grants to such that follow him a life of bliss’ (1.20), and in both moralising observations he ascribes God’s punishment to those who do not adhere to God’s code. Throughout the *Antiquities*, Josephus is at pains to reinforce this message, frequently interjecting similar moralising observations into the narrative. He encourages the reader to view the narrative as illustrating the greatness of God and his power (8.418) and states in no uncertain terms the mistaken beliefs of the Epicureans, ‘who exclude Providence from human life and refuse to believe that God governs its affairs’ (10.278). The moralising in the Adiabene narrative should therefore be seen as a bookend with the Proem, a summing up of Josephus’s dominant theme.

5.4.3 Reversals of Fortune

Within the context of Izates’s relationship with Artabanus, much is made by Josephus of the instability of fortune (τύχη). Izates is invited by Artabanus to ‘cast an eye at the instability of fortune (βλέψον οὖν εἰς τὸ τῆς τύχης ἄστατον)’ (20.57), Izates encourages Artabanus to ‘take heart and not be confounded by your present condition (τὸ παρὸν) as though it were past cure’ (20.59) and Izates honours Artabanus upon returning to Adiabene, for he ‘had regard not for his present fortune (οὐκ εἰς τὸ παρὸν αὐτοῦ τῆς τύχης ἀποβλέπων)’ but his former dignity’ (20.61).⁵⁶³ Three closely related sentiments following one another in the text seem unlikely to be random. Why has Josephus sought to make much of what otherwise looks somewhat incidental to the text?

There appear to be two explanations. The first, that Josephus was probably following Greco-Roman historiographical convention, is examined in Chapter 7. The second is that

⁵⁶³ An echo of 18.193, where a slave of Gaius hands the captive Agrippa a jug of water, omitting, as Agrippa said, ‘nothing of the respect that you accorded me in my former state’.

changes of fortune (Josephus variously uses μεταβολή or τύχη to describe such changes) are elsewhere remarked upon by Josephus in the *Antiquities* as a means of illustrating that either good, or bad, circumstances can change for an individual through God's will, but also that it is a noble spirit that is able to withstand the vicissitudes of fate. The biblical Joseph experienced better circumstances under a change of fortune (ὕπὸ τῆς μεταβολῆς), once he was sold by the merchants to Pharaoh's chief cook, but still displayed how 'a noble spirit can surmount the trials of life where it is genuine and does not simply accommodate itself to passing prosperity' (2.40).⁵⁶⁴ The prophet Samuel also uses μεταβολή to warn Saul that he was facing a final change in fortune (for the worse) (6.335) and Herod became king of the Jews by a change in fortune (τύχη) (14.9). In language very similar to the Adiabene narrative, the Jews tell Petronius, the Emperor Gaius's legate in Judaea, charged with erecting a statue of Gaius in the Temple, that 'Fortune, moreover, is wont to veer now toward one side, now toward the other in human affairs' (18.267).⁵⁶⁵ The message seems clear, both in earlier books and for Izates: it is God that changes the affairs of humans either for better or worse. As Josephus uses the temporal imagery of ally in the Artabanus dialogue to reinforce the concept of spiritual ally, so he uses τύχη in the Artabanus dialogue to remind the reader of another element of his spiritual themes.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁴ It is interesting that Josephus also uses μεταβάλλω to describe Izates's and Helena's conversion in the opening paragraph of the narrative (20.17). Josephus is somewhat inconsistent in his use of words to describe apparent episodes of conversion (see Appendix 2 to this chapter for an examination of this), but uses μεταβάλλω on two other occasions. The invitation to the Pellans to do what the Idumaeans and Ituraeans had done is phrased in terms of μεταβάλλω (13.397). Josephus uses the noun form μεταβολή to describe the reverse process, that of the apostasy of Antiochus (*BJ* 7.50), and in the warning against apostasy that God gives to Solomon (ξενικούς θεοὺς θρησκεῦειν μεταβαλόμενον) (8.127). It is undoubtedly true that Josephus wishes the reader to see the 'conversion' of Helena and Izates as a change (for the better) in fortune.

⁵⁶⁵ See Chapter 3 Appendix 1 for more similarities between the Adiabene narrative and the story of Petronius. It is also interesting that a very similar turn of phrase is used by Josephus in *BJ* 3.396 when he describes Titus reflecting on Josephus's own misfortunes as a prisoner of war.

⁵⁶⁶ In addition, on several occasions in the *Antiquities*, Josephus moralises on the corruption of power and privilege, by emphasising the rewards of good fortune, and how God will reverse such good fortune if it is not accompanied by piety and adherence to God's law: 6.264 (reflections on Saul), 7.37-8 (reflections on the lengths to which men will go to seize power), 8.251 (reflections on Rehoboam's corruption through power and wealth and his overthrow by Shishak of Egypt as God's agent).

5.4.4. Royal munificence

Josephus uses very similar phrases at various points in the *Antiquities* to describe the display of royal favour to chosen subjects, usually where these are Jewish, in an effort to reinforce the impression of loyalty and a close relationship between the Jewish subject and the monarch. Darius honours Zerubbabel by seating Zerubbabel next to him and calling him kinsman (συγγενής) (11.57). Ptolemy seats Joseph the Tobiad at his own table every day (12.173). Jonathan the Hasmonaean appears to engender competition between the rival Seleucid and Ptolemaic factions as to who can do him the most honour. Alexander Balas, Seleucid pretender, expends much effort wooing him. To counter his rival Demetrius, he sends as gifts a purple robe and a gold crown (13.45). Jonathan is then rewarded with honours by both Alexander Balas and Ptolemy Philometor, and Alexander gives Jonathan a (further!) purple robe and makes him sit with him on a dais, calling him First Friend (πρῶτον τῶν φίλων) (13.83-86). Alexander subsequently gives Jonathan ‘rewards and honours, including a gold brooch, such as are customarily given to kinsmen of kings’ (13.102). Antiochus VI, Alexander’s successor, in turn presents Jonathan with cups of gold, (more!) purple garments, a gold brooch, and permits him to be called First Friend (13.146). Somewhat later, Herod received the Hasmonaean Hyrcanus ‘with all honour, assigning him first place in meetings, gave him the most honoured seat at banquets and called him Father’ (15.21).

Josephus use the same symbolism in the Adiabene narrative, crafting the Artabanus episode to bolster Izates’s status as a monarch, and also as a special recipient of honours from an even greater monarch. It is firstly Izates who bestows honours on Artabanus, when ‘he assigned him every honour at his councils and gave him the chief seat at his banquets’ (20.61). In turn, once Artabanus has re-established himself, Artabanus returns the compliment by repaying Izates ‘with the highest honours that they recognise. For he

permitted him to wear his tiara upright and to sleep on a bed of gold – privileges and symbols that belong only to the king of the Parthians’ (20.67).

5.4.5. Loyalty and disloyalty

It has been observed in Chapter 3 that Josephus attempts in the *Antiquities* to dispel the stereotype of Jewish disloyalty, largely by lengthy recitals of Roman decrees in favour of the Jews that either expressly or implicitly attest to their loyalty to the Roman state. The Adiabene narrative continues these efforts, both directly through the mouth of Izates and indirectly through the interaction between Izates and Artabanus. Josephus’s slightly clumsy attempts to present Izates as loyal to Rome in his reported speech dialogue with Vardanes (20.69-74), as well as the sideways nod to Rome regarding sending Claudius his half-brothers as hostages, have been discussed in Chapter 2. In this context, Josephus’s portrayal of Artabanus’s and Izates’s characters as loyal is also interesting. Readers of the earlier books of the *Antiquities* will have observed the behaviour of Pacorus, besieger of Jerusalem in 40 BCE, who tricked Phasael, Herod’s brother, to surrender by means of oaths subsequently broken (14.348). In the Adiabene narrative, Vologeses will have been seen as another Parthian behaving in a similarly dishonourable way, in demanding back the honours that his father bestowed on Izates.

However, Josephus needs to present Izates as atypical, and in this respect he needs to present Artabanus as similarly atypical; there would have been no value in Izates being loyal to someone displaying the perceived national characteristic of perfidy. Josephus’s portrait of Artabanus is therefore of an honourable man. Whether by design by Josephus or by happy coincidence, Artabanus is shown in the earlier Asinaeus narrative as a man of ‘unimpeachable faith’ (18.337), and having won Asinaeus’s trust by swearing to his ancestral gods and giving him his right hand (18.328-9, 18.334), Artabanus sticks to this.

It is this trustworthiness, through the giving of oaths and of his right hand, which is then echoed in the Adiabene narrative, both in the humble and loyal manner of their meeting (20.58) and his declaration of loyalty as a friend and ally (φίλον δέ με καὶ σύμμαχον εὐρήσεις) (20.59) and also when Izates offers his right hand and oaths and mediation to secure Artabanus's restoration of the throne (20.62). In turn, Artabanus rewards Izates for his loyalty. If only to reinforce the point that some Parthians can display admirable characteristics, Cinnamus, Artabanus's temporary successor, is also described as καλὸς καὶ ἀγαθός, translated by Feldman as 'a thorough gentleman' (20.64).

5.5. Dissimilarities with the *Jewish Antiquities*

In contrast, there are aspects of the Adiabene narrative that do not easily fit into the wider *Antiquities* framework.

5.5.1. Josephus and sex

Almost immediately in the Adiabene narrative, we are presented with sex when we are told that King Monobazus, 'seized with a passion (ἀλοὺς ἔρωτι) for his sister Helena, took her as his partner in marriage and got her pregnant' (20.18). In this particular instance, Josephus is anchoring his tale not only on lust, but incestuous lust at that. This is, ostensibly, very atypical of his approach to sex within the context of the *Antiquities* as a whole. Without exception, sex, or more particularly lust (ἔρως) for Josephus means trouble at best and ruin at worst. Lust leads to rape in the story of Dinah and the subsequent massacre of the Shechemites (1.337-340) and the rape of the wife of the Ephraimite by the Benjaminites (5.136-149). Lust forms the centrepiece of cautionary tales of adultery (or resistance to adultery) in the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife (2.41-60) and David and Bathsheba (7.130-146), lust leads to the elimination of rivals (David and Abigail (6.300-9) and

Anilaeus and the Parthian's wife (18.341-352)), and lust leads to the worship of foreign gods (Zambrias and the Midianite women (4.131-5) and Solomon and foreign wives (8.190-3)). Lust is also at the heart of many of the troubles in Herod's court; Pheroras had a mad passion for a female slave (16.194-9), Herod was smitten by Glaphyra (16.206), and Sylleus and Salome had an erotic desire for one another (16.220-5). In all cases ἔρωϑ is to blame.

Even more obviously, incestuous relationships are painted in a negative light and Josephus calls these the 'grossest of sins' (κακὸν μέγιστον) (3.274). Amnon's rape of his half-sister Tamar (7.162-172) leads to his death, the Emperor Gaius's sexual relations with his sister are yet another example of his depravity (19.204) and Berenice's supposed liaison with her brother Agrippa gets a negative mention (20.145), after the largely positive portrait of Agrippa that precedes this. Glaphyra's marriage to Archelaus, her dead husband Alexander's brother, and therefore a forbidden partner according to the Law, prompts Alexander to visit her in an accusatory dream, quite the opposite experience of Monobazus.

It is clear from these and many other examples that, although Josephus uses sex to, as it were, spice up the narrative, as Feldman sees it, to appeal to an Hellenistic audience,⁵⁶⁷ there is also a strong cautionary tale that passion is undesirable, closely following a Stoic tenet that one should strive for freedom from emotion,⁵⁶⁸ and also a basic proposition that sex out of (lawful) marriage is contrary to Jewish Law.⁵⁶⁹ In this respect the Adiabene narrative is atypical, in that good things, namely Izates's birth, come from both ἔρωϑ and incest. Although non-Jewish incest per se does not escape Josephus's wrath, as seen from his condemnation of Themusa's sexual relations with her son Phraataces (18.40-43), it may

⁵⁶⁷ See Feldman (1998b) pp. 185-188.

⁵⁶⁸ A quality possessed by Moses (4.328-9). See Long (1974) pp. 206-7.

⁵⁶⁹ See generally Loader (2011) pp. 365-367.

be that Josephus found it excusable if good things came out of non-Jewish incest, and indeed the marriage between Ptolemy, who allowed Onias the High Priest to build a temple at Leontopolis, and his wife/sister Cleopatra, is, as is the Adiabene marriage, similarly approved of, both Ptolemy and Cleopatra being described as possessing ‘piety’ (εὐσέβειαν) (13.69). In the case of the Adiabene narrative, it could be considered that ‘good things’ (namely Izates) come out of non-Jewish incest.

5.5.2. Josephus and dreams

For Monobazus, the pregnancy of Helena is the occasion for a nocturnal supernatural visitation, whereby a voice (we are not told whose) announces to him, as he is sleeping, the future birth of a person blessed by Divine good fortune, who ‘by the providence of God, had had a happy start and would attain a fortunate end’ (20.18).⁵⁷⁰ Although dream sequences are a not infrequent part of the narrative of the *Antiquities*, this particular sequence differs from the rest, both because Josephus does not directly tell his reader that a dream (ὄναρ) has taken place and also because, where elsewhere the dreamer receives a visitation, the visitor is inevitably identified, usually God, but occasionally, such as in the case of Glaphyra’s dream of her dead husband Alexander, another human. For the most part, in the biblical narrative, dreams are either God’s way of warning the protagonist to do or desist from doing an action or actions,⁵⁷¹ or are predictive of specific future events.⁵⁷²

In a few cases, however, within the biblical paraphrase of the first 11 books, God appears to individuals foretelling great things. He appears to Jacob (1.279-283, 2.172-175),

⁵⁷⁰ A phrasal echo of the people’s prayer for Solomon upon his accession that he ‘might have a fortunate issue and that he might end his rule in a rich and happy old age’ (8.2). Marcus LCL 281 p. 217 note b, sees the phrase as Homeric.

⁵⁷¹ Laban (1.313), Gideon (5.215-7), Samuel (5.348-50), Nathan (7.147), Solomon (8.125-9).

⁵⁷² Joseph (2.11-16), the butler’s and baker’s dreams (2.64-86), the barley cake (5.219), Daniel (10.200-215, 10.216-8), post-biblically Alexander and the High Priest (11.333-5). Josephus himself was, of course, no stranger to prophecy, and his own prophetic utterances concerning Vespasian’s future glory as Emperor are recorded in *BJ* 3.351-2, 399-402.

promising that ‘an abundant presence of great blessings (μεγάλων ἀγαθῶν) in every respect will await you by virtue of my assistance’.⁵⁷³ Joseph has dreams predictive of good fortune (εὐδαιμονία καταγγελλομένη) (2.10). God also appears in a dream to Amram, Moses’s father, to foretell of Moses’s birth and future role as a saviour of the Israelites (2.212) and to Solomon (8.22-5) to offer him a choice of gifts in return for his piety. In this respect, the Adiabene narrative seeks to draw the reader back to earlier examples of God’s prediction of a great future. Josephus has, however, to be careful not to overstep the mark and present Izates as on all fours with the Biblical heroes. There are only two post-biblical examples of God appearing in dreams to humans in the *Antiquities*, being the dreams of Jadus the High Priest (11.327) and Hyrcanus (13.322) and in both cases the recipient’s prophetic skill may be seen as the catalyst for such appearance. No such opportunity is present in the Adiabene narrative, and therefore the voice is better presented as anonymous. However, in such circumstances, to have stated directly that Monobazus was dreaming might have lead the reader to discount the episode as merely a fantasy, hence the somewhat circumspect choice of words.

5.5.3. The story of Asinaeus and Anilaeus

Josephus’s other major narrative on Jews and Parthia, the Asinaeus and Anilaeus narrative, is often seen as closely related to the Adiabene narrative, with some scholars assuming that they derive from the same source.⁵⁷⁴ The question of sources is discussed in Chapter 2 but, regardless of any conclusions, on the basis that it can be shown that Josephus’s own authorial imprint overlays whatever source texts he might have used, it is worth examining whether the two narratives have stylistic or other coincidences and differences. For the most part, the two narratives appear to complement one another (albeit the Adiabene narrative is

⁵⁷³ 1.280, trans. Feldman (2004).

⁵⁷⁴ The historical setting of the Asinaeus and Anilaeus story probably coincides with the early part of the Adiabene narrative (see Debevoise (1938) p. 156 n. 54 for dating).

significantly more complex), and the theme of the value of piety is overtly presented in both narratives. The subtext of Jewish ἀνδρεία is also present in both, and both have a similar political background of regional stasis. Some measure of how Jews were perceived by their neighbours can also be gleaned from both. Josephus asserts (18.371) that the Babylonians hated the Jews and had always quarrelled with them because of the contrary nature of their laws. Albeit that Babylonians were not necessarily representative of all ethnicities within the Parthian Empire, this lends some credence to Helena's concerns that Izates's adoption of the laws of Moses would not find universal favour amongst his subjects.

5.6. The role of God in the narrative

The role of God does not fit in quite so easily into an analysis of aspects of the narrative that either do, or do not, support the general themes of the *Antiquities*. At one level, of course, it is obvious that the basic proposition contained in the *Antiquities* of God as an all-powerful being who rewards the pious with his protection is abundantly clear in the Adiabene narrative. However, there are several aspects of the narrative in relation to God that are not entirely consistent with the overall framework.

5.6.1. Detheologising

The direct role of God in the biblical books of the *Antiquities* is far less emphasised than in the Old Testament. As Feldman points out,⁵⁷⁵ other than in his account of Moses, Josephus consistently deemphasises, or de-theologises, God's role so readily apparent in the Biblical versions of the stories. He explains this anomaly in respect of Moses as Josephus's efforts to present the Jews' great leader as similar to Greco-Roman great leaders who were

⁵⁷⁵ Feldman (1998b) pp. 205-209.

similarly divinely inspired. The role of God in the Adiabene narrative is, in contrast, very direct. Josephus sets the scene by introducing Izates from the outset as someone who, through God's providence, will be blessed, repeated in 20.48. The manifestation of God's blessing, Izates's triumphs over his enemies, is introduced in no uncertain terms in 20.48, where the entire paragraph attempts to hammer home the point that God will readily intervene to save the pious. The narrative then lists the manifestations of God's bounty. Josephus attributes to God Izates's success in denying both Vardanes's (20.72) and his own nobles' attempts (20.81) to unseat him. In addition, the showdown between Vologeses and Izates (86-91), the narrative climax, is constructed in effect as the triumph of God over the unbeliever. As counterpoint therefore to 20.48, Josephus summarises in typical fashion (20.91) that Izates escaped the threats of the Parthian (and others) by the providence of God (κατὰ θεοῦ πρόνοιαν). It could well be the case that the close connection between Izates and God in the Adiabene narrative is analogous to Josephus's treatment of Moses and is another attempt to present an admirable hero.

5.6.2. Prayer to God

There are other aspects of Izates's relationship with God that should be examined, in particular the portion of the narrative that deals with Izates's prayer to God (20.89-90). In the first instance, the only other post-biblical occasion in the *Antiquities* when God's action has been as a direct result of prayer occurs in 14.28. When priests, besieged in Jerusalem by Hyrcanus, were duped into paying the besiegers for sacrificial animals that they never received, they prayed to God and were answered when God sent a drought upon the entire country. The fact that Izates's prayer is answered therefore clearly indicates his special relationship with God. In addition, it is worth focusing on the prayer itself. In general, throughout the *Antiquities*, Josephus seems to be very sparing in his reporting of dialogue from man to God. In the case of recording such dialogue by means of indirect speech, there

are relatively few examples in the *Antiquities*, and these are all Biblical, one third of these being a dialogue between King David and God throughout Book 7.⁵⁷⁶ There are even fewer examples, again all biblical, where the dialogue is in reported speech.⁵⁷⁷ Once again, the inference to be drawn from the reporting of Izates's prayer is a direct link between Izates and the Biblical heroes.

Izates's name for God is also interesting. In supplication, he addresses him (20.90) as δέσποτα κύριε, translated by Feldman as 'sovereign Lord', repeated when he makes the statement that τῶν πάντων δὲ δικαίως μόνον καὶ πρῶτον ἡγήμαι κύριον, translated by Feldman as 'I have made it my belief that Thou art the first and only rightful Lord of all', the use of the perfect tense here emphasising both the nature of Izates as a convert and also his continued piety. Although Josephus uses δέσποτα fairly frequently within the biblical narrative as an address used by biblical characters to God or as a reference to God,⁵⁷⁸ the use of κύριε as a synonym for God is extremely rare within the *Antiquities*. It is nowhere else used in this way in the vocative, and there is only a single reference otherwise, in 13.68, a description of the building of the temple at Leontopolis, when Onias the High Priest repeats Isaiah's prophecy (Is. 19:19) that 'there shall be an altar in Egypt to the Lord God' (κυρίῳ τῷ θεῷ), in very similar language to that used in the Septuagint. It is interesting that Josephus so rarely uses κύριος for 'Lord', particularly when it is used in this way in the

⁵⁷⁶ 6.25, 6.143-4, 6.358-60, 7.154, 7.202, 7.294, 7.324, 7.327, 9.8, 9.32, 9.175, 10.29, 10.199, 11.144.

⁵⁷⁷ 1.272, 2.270-4, 2.335-7, 4.40, 5.38-41, 8.23, 8.107-111, 8.111-117, 11.65, 11.162, 11.230. Although the prayer from Aristobulus to God (14.24) is in direct speech, this is not a private conversation but a prayer on behalf of all the people.

⁵⁷⁸ Proem: 1.20 (πάντων πατήρ τε καὶ δεσπότης ὁ θεός); Isaac: 1.272 (δέσποτα παντὸς αἰῶνος καὶ δημιουργὲ τῆς ὅλης οὐσίας); Moses: 2.271 (c.f. Exod 3.11, 4.10), 4.40, 4.46 (δέσποτα τῶν ὅλων) (also 1.72); Joshua: 5.41, 5.93 (πατήρ καὶ δεσπότης); Solomon: 8.23, 8.107, 8.111; Zerubbabel: 11.65; Nehemiah: 11.162; Mordechai: 11.230.

Septuagint,⁵⁷⁹ and such usage would therefore appear to point to Izates as someone with a unique relationship with God.⁵⁸⁰

5.6.3. Particularity v. universalism in the narrative

It has been observed in Chapter 3 that, at times, Josephus is so keen to craft his history in a way that might appeal to his non-Jewish reader that he sometimes attempts to present the Jewish God and his commandments within a universalistic framework and, in particular, appears not to stress the monotheistic element of worship of the Jewish God. He appears to have no such compunction in the Adiabene narrative. The entire ‘conversion’ narrative, with its ultimate emphasis on Izates’s circumcision, appears at odds with a universalistic approach. In the first instance, as part of his summary of the conversion narrative, Josephus concludes that, in saving Izates from desperate straits, ‘God thus demonstrated that those who ... trust in him *alone* (μόνῳ) do not lose the rewards of their piety’ (20.48).

Even more definitively, Izates’s prayer to God before his intended engagement with Vologeses contains the phrase ‘I have made it my belief that Thou art the first and only rightful Lord of all’ (τῶν πάντων δὲ δικαίως μόνον καὶ πρῶτον ἡγῆμαι κύριον) (20.90). Josephus uses a number of adjectives to describe God throughout the *Antiquities*.⁵⁸¹ God is

⁵⁷⁹ See Shutt (1980) pp. 179-180.

⁵⁸⁰ See Jonquiere (2007) pp. 202-207, who also refers to parallels elsewhere in the Old Testament, particularly Psalms, where there are invocations to God to punish those who have offended Him and (p. 237) use of the phrase ‘to taste the goodness of God’. Conversely, Schalit (1965) pp. 172-6 argues that the prayer is taken directly from Josephus’s written Aramaic source, without Josephan embellishment other than minor additions. If this were correct, then much of the biblical correlation so far discussed might be seen as random. Schalit’s argument appears to be based on the assumption that where Josephus invents (for example Moses’s speech to God in AJ 4.40-50, not found in the OT), the prayer is lengthy and embellished; where the text conforms to an original (for example Mordechai’s to God in AJ 11.229-230, which conforms closely to the Septuagint), it is short. In addition, both Mordechai’s prayer and Izates’s prayer are in direct speech. Therefore, he argues, because Izates’s prayer is short and in direct speech, it must therefore conform to an unknown original source, rather than be a Josephan composition. The speculative nature of the reasoning is obvious (see Barish (1983) pp. 63-65, who clearly shows an OT model in Hezekiah for Izates’s prayer, and Marciak (2014) pp. 119-120). Moreover, two out of the eleven examples given above of Josephan biblical heroes addressing God in direct speech are clearly not a paraphrase of biblical dialogue (1.272 and 2.335-7), which directly contradicts Schalit’s theory.

⁵⁸¹ See generally Jonquiere (2007) pp. 253-271.

described as ‘One’,⁵⁸² most high (μέγιστος),⁵⁸³ true (ἀληθῆ),⁵⁸⁴ Lord of all that is in heaven, the earth and the sea,⁵⁸⁵ supreme authority (αὐτοκράτορα),⁵⁸⁶ and a judge.⁵⁸⁷ There is no other instance of the exact words in 20.90 being used, but very similar ones are used in Josephus’s description of Elijah’s contest with the prophets of Baal, when the Israelites fell on the earth and worshipped one God (προσεκύνουν ἓνα θεόν) who they acknowledged as the Almighty (μέγιστον) and only true (ἀληθῆ μόνον) God,⁵⁸⁸ and consequently Elijah convinced the people that the only true God was the Eternal (μόνος ἔτι θεὸς ὁ ὢν) (8.350). It therefore seems clear that both the language of 20.90 and the context closely mirror one of the most overtly particularistic passages of the *Antiquities*’ biblical paraphrase.⁵⁸⁹ We can be under no misapprehension that in the case of Izates, as for Elijah, the Jewish God triumphs over all others’ gods.

5.7. Summary and conclusions

In summary, therefore, the following observations can be made about the Adiabene narrative and its place within the *Antiquities*.

⁵⁸² 4.201, 5.97, 8.343.

⁵⁸³ 6.86, 8.343, 9.211.

⁵⁸⁴ 8.343.

⁵⁸⁵ 4.40.

⁵⁸⁶ 3.214.

⁵⁸⁷ 7.199.

⁵⁸⁸ 8.335-343.

⁵⁸⁹ In line with expressions of monotheism at 3.91 (‘The first word teaches us that God is one and that He only must be worshipped’) and 4.201 (‘God is but one’). However, at the same time, Jonquiere (2007) pp. 253-4 believes that Josephus’s use of *πρῶτος* here can also be seen as an hierarchical concept akin to the Stoic concept of φύσις and the concept of God as the source of everything. See, for example, Cleanthes’s *Hymn to Zeus*: ‘Nothing occurs on the earth apart from you, O God, nor in the heavenly regions or on the sea’ (lines 11 to 13, SVFi 537), which seems remarkably close to Josephus’s own view of God. For Stoic views generally on φύσις, see Long (1974) p. 179 ff. If this is correct, it may be an element of universalism creeping in, as it were, through the back door and would be yet another example of Josephus subtly wrapping Old Testament monotheism with Greco-Roman terminology, in an attempt to convince his likely Greco-Roman audience that Judaism was not so different from paganism.

Firstly, the episode has been deliberately crafted to show that Izates, the convert to Judaism, was a man who possessed in full measure the characteristics most esteemed by the Greco-Roman world, whilst still being quintessentially Jewish. In this respect it conforms closely with the portraits of other Jewish heroes in the *Antiquities*. The structure of the narrative displays his breeding, his remarkable birth, his youthful precocity and his possession of the cardinal virtues, the most important being his piety. The narrative also repeats the message of the *Antiquities* as a whole, namely that the Jewish God is both an all-powerful ally and protects those who show Him piety, providing them with the reward of εὐδαιμονία.

However, it is also clear that Josephus works hard to bend the narrative round awkward facts and his audiences' prejudices to give his protagonist credibility as a hero. Josephus is, in particular, very selective in his narrative of Parthian history. Almost all inconvenient facts relating to any anti-Roman actions by Izates and his family that we know from other sources are avoided, so as not to conflict with the portrait that Josephus builds of a man to be admired by Romans. Gotarzes (whom we know from other sources as hostile to Rome) is by implication portrayed as a friend of Rome (the nobles chose him in preference to the anti-Roman Vardanes) and then hastily dismissed in a sentence, thus avoiding mention of Izates's support for him. Josephus completely omits any mention of Corbulo's campaigns, thus avoiding the awkward fact that Monobazus, far from continuing Izates's supposed enmity with Vologeses, actually is a crucial supporter of the Parthian king in his war with Rome. Any mention of Parthia as a match for Rome's military might is also carefully avoided, as is the Parthian feeling of cultural superiority over Rome.⁵⁹⁰ The result is a story of Izates as friend of Rome, putting into the mouth of Izates praise of Rome reminiscent of

⁵⁹⁰ Of which there is significant evidence in Tacitus's *Annals*; see Chapter 4 pp. 119-120.

Agrippa's speech in the *Jewish War*, and establishing him as a peacemaker between Rome and Vardanes (*AJ* 20.70-73), and the foe of Rome's enemy (at least in the 60s) Vologeses.

It is also clear that the text and subject matter have been crafted to repeat many of the common themes of the *Antiquities* as a whole. Josephus's penchant for moralising is evident, along with as is his use of the theme of fraternal jealousy as a dramatic element in the narrative. Stylistic flourishes elsewhere evident in the *Antiquities*, such as the illustration of reversals of Fortune, can also be seen.

There are also some unique, or almost unique aspects as well. The positive portrayal of sex (and incest at that), the unusual use of a dream sequence, the direct address to God, and the unique language used, all give the narrative interest and mark it out as special. In this respect, the portrayal of God is unabashedly Deuteronomistic, a conditional covenant between Jews and God, and the narrative is also an unequivocal statement for monotheism, a concept at times diluted in the *Antiquities* in Josephus's attempt to appeal to a pagan audience through presenting Judaism with a universalistic face.

The narrative also has comparatively little relationship with the other extended Parthian narrative, that of Asinaeus and Anilaeus, other than geographical proximity. Although the central message, that of the rewards of piety and the perils of impiety, could be said to be similar, the narratives are fundamentally different, in that the characterization of the two brothers revolves purely around their bravery, rather than any more rounded picture, and thus principally serves the narrower objective of rebuttal of cowardice, rather than the more complex themes of the Adiabene narrative.

Mason's views have been discussed, in relation to the nature and purposes of the *Antiquities* as a whole, in Chapter 3 (pp. 65-67), and he applies this reasoning to his analysis of the relationship of the Adiabene narrative to the wider *Antiquities*. He therefore sees the

Adiabene narrative as part of a wider outreach, a ‘handbook’ to Gentiles who were interested in becoming Jews. He concludes that its place is to reinforce the basic message of the *Antiquities*, ‘namely that full conversion to Judaism is a good thing’ [to be considering] (my addition).⁵⁹¹ He believes that the positioning of the narrative as a quasi-philosophical and political (constitutional) treatise supports this. The problem with this approach is that it relies on the basic assumption that the Adiabene narrative fits within a proselytising whole. For the reasons outlined in Chapter 3, the wider argument is rejected and therefore similarly the narrower argument of the Adiabene narrative’s place alongside this.

In conclusion therefore, the narrative is neither simply a relatively isolated example of Josephus fulfilling his promise in Book 1 to provide a history of Jews by including those outside Judaea, as he says he has done when concluding his twenty books (20.260) nor, conversely, an exhortation to would-be converts to, as it were, take the plunge. It is, however, most definitely a narrative with a purpose. Unlike the Asinaeus and Anilaeus episode, which does indeed deal with the ‘harsh treatment’ that the Jews received from Eastern powers, there is no element of pathos or suffering in the Adiabenian narrative. Rather, it is a triumphalist example of the inherent attractiveness of Judaism to non-Jews, even royal non-Jews, because Judaism is respectable, because Jews can be possessed of all the noble and heroic qualities admired by Greco-Romans and that, contrary no doubt to general belief, the Jewish God is all powerful and protects those who worship Him in piety. It is, therefore, the ultimate proof text of the previous nineteen books. What the reader might have made of this is examined in Chapter 7.

⁵⁹¹ Mason (1998) p. 94.

[illegible]

Appendix 2. Josephus's use of 'conversion' language

From the table below, it can be seen that throughout the Adiabene narrative, Josephus's uses different, often rather vague words and phrases, to describe ostensibly potentially similar processes of adopting Jewish customs ultimately to a point where the principal protagonists become Ἰουδαῖος, Jewish.

Table 5

Ref.	Conversion	Verb	Predicate
20.17	Izates & Helena	μεταβάλλω	τὸν βίον εἰς τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθῃ
20.34	Women of Charax	τὸν θεὸν σέβω	ὥς Ἰουδαίοις πάτριον ἦν
20.35	Izates	συναναπεῖθω	
20.35	Helena	μετακομίζω	εἰς τοὺς ἐκείνων μετακεκομίσθαι νόμους.
20.38	Izates	μετατίθημι	εἰς ἐκεῖνα [ἔθῃ]
20.75	Monobazus	καταλείπω	τὰ πάτρια

Ref.	Religious practice	Verb	Predicate
20.38	Helena	χαίρω	τοῖς Ἰουδαίων ἔθουσιν
20.41	Izates	τὸ θεῖον σέβω	
20.41	Izates	ζηλόω	τὰ πάτρια τῶν Ἰουδαίων
20.75	Monobazus	χράομαι	ἔθει τοῖς Ἰουδαίων

Within the Adiabene narrative, it can therefore be seen that there are no two episodes that use the same verb, other than Izates and the women of Charax (τὸν θεὸν/τὸ θεῖον σέβω), and even the predicates use different nouns to describe Jewish observance, albeit that the word ἔθῃ is the most prevalent. Is the Adiabene narrative, out of all episodes described by Josephus as relating to a person or persons becoming Jewish, unique in its inexactitude of terminology?

In fact, the issue of vagueness and lack of consistency when describing events that appear to be conversions of non-Jews to Jews or such persons' religious practices once converted, rather than emulation of some Jewish practices by non-Jews (the distinction is not always clear), is not confined to the Adiabene narrative. Although it is sometimes difficult to determine whether a given individual born a non-Jew becomes a Jew, particularly because of Josephus's use of vague and inconsistent language when referring to non-Jews who to a greater or lesser extent embrace the practices of Judaism, Josephus appears in his works to

describe principally three categories of convert (other than the Adiabeniensians): (1) Forced (attempted) conversions of tribes (Idumaeans (13.257, 15.254-5) Ituraeans (13.318) and Pellans (13.397 – they refused to convert)) or individuals captured by Jews in war and threatened with death or circumcision (Metilius the Roman centurion (*BJ* 2.454) and King Agrippa's noblemen (*Vita* 113,149)), (2) Non-Jewish would-be husbands of Herodian princesses,⁵⁹² and (3) the Roman matron Fulvia (18.82). It is also interesting that in no instance of conversion other than Adiabene does Josephus focus at any great length on the process or do other than describe the event in relatively unemotional terms. The language is relatively prosaic and is either couched in terms of circumcision for males (Azizus), or that the individual(s) adopted (or were intended to adopt) the customs of the Jews (Pellans, Sylleus, Epiphanes, Fulvia) or both (Idumaeans, Ituraeans, Polemo, Agrippa's soldiers, Metilius).

It is therefore instructive to analyse, as has been done for the Adiabene narrative, the verbs and predicates associated with these 'conversions', as set out in the following table.

Table 6

Ref.	Conversion/Apostasy	Cat.	Verb	Predicate
11.285	Persians ⁵⁹³		περιτέμνω	τὴν αἰδῶ
13.257	Idumaeans	1	περιτέμνω	τὰ αἰδοῖα
13.257	Idumaeans	1	χράσμαι	τοῖς Ἰουδαίων νόμοις
13.318	Ituraeans	1	περιτέμνω	
13.318	Ituraeans	1	ζάω	κατὰ τοὺς Ἰουδαίων νόμους
13.397	Pella	1	μεταβάλλω	ἐς τὰ πάτρια τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθη
15.254	Idumaeans	1	μεθίστημι	τὴν πολιτείαν αὐτῶν εἰς τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθη καὶ νόμιμα
15.255	Costobar	2	μεταλαμβάνω	τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθη
16.225	Sylleus	2	ἐγγράφω	τοῖς τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθεσι
18.82	Fulvia	3	προσέρχομαι	νομίμοις τοῖς Ἰουδαϊκοῖς
20.139	Epiphanes	2	μεταλαμβάνω	τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθη
20.139	Azizus	2	περιτέμνω	
20.145	Polemo	2	περιτέμνω	
20.146	Polemo	2	ἀπαλλάσσω ἐμμένειν	τοῖς ἔθεσι τῶν Ἰουδαίων

⁵⁹² Sylleus the Arab (16.225) and Epiphanes, son of King Antiochus of Commagene (20.139) who both refused circumcision, Azizus of Emesa (20.139) and Polemo, king of Cilicia (20.145) who both accepted.

⁵⁹³ It is unclear from both Josephus and the original OT (Esth 8.17) whether the circumcision of Persians in the Esther narrative out of fear of the Jews was conversion or simulation ('from fear of the Jews, they had themselves circumcised' (*AJ* 11.285)); see Cohen (1999) pp. 181-2 and n. 29 for a discussion of this.

Ref.	Conversion/Apostasy	Cat.	Verb	Predicate
BJ 2.454	Metilius	1	ιουδαίζω	μέχρι περιτομῆς
BJ 7.50	Antiochus ⁵⁹⁴		μεταβάλλω (μεταβολή)	
Vita 113	Soldiers	1	περιτέμνω	
Vita 149	Soldiers	1	μεταβαίνω	εἰς τὰ παρ' αὐτοῖς ἔθη

It can be seen that Josephus, outside the Adiabene narrative, appears equally inconsistent in his choice of verbs when describing acts that also appear to be ‘conversion’, using for example μεταβάλλω,⁵⁹⁵ χράομαι⁵⁹⁶, μεθίστημι⁵⁹⁷, μεταλαμβάνω,⁵⁹⁸ ἐγγράφω,⁵⁹⁹ προσέρχομαι⁶⁰⁰ and μεταβαίνω⁶⁰¹ to describe ostensibly similar activity, as well as the verb ιουδαίζω (applied to Metilius the centurion).⁶⁰² Additionally, it can be seen that although we may want from a modern-day perspective to distinguish between so-called forced conversions, marital conversions of convenience and conversions from belief, Josephus does not and the verbs appear to be used in an interchangeable fashion.⁶⁰³

⁵⁹⁴ Antiochus was an apostate Jew of Antioch, who sought to ‘furnish proof of his conversion’ to the non-Jewish mob during the aftermath of the Jewish Revolt.

⁵⁹⁵ The invitation to the Pellans to do what the Idumaeans and Ituraeans had done is phrased in terms of μεταβάλλω (13.397), echoed by its use in respect of both Izates and Helena (AJ 20.17) as an introduction to the narrative.

⁵⁹⁶ Idumaeans (13.257) and Monobazus (20.75).

⁵⁹⁷ Idumaeans (15.254).

⁵⁹⁸ 15.255 - ‘Costobar ... [Idumaeen husband of Salome] did not think that it was proper ... for the Idumaeans to adopt the customs of the Jews and be subject to them’ (οὔτε τοῖς Ἰδουμαίοις τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθνη μεταλαβοῦσιν ὑπ’ ἐκείνοις εἶναι). 20.139 - Epiphanes, son of King Antiochus was similarly ‘not willing to convert to the Jewish religion’ (μὴ βουλευθεὶς τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθνη μεταλαβεῖν). Josephus, however, gives no further help when mentioning two spouses for Herodian family princesses who *did* take the plunge, Drusilla was married to Azizus of Emesa (20.139) and Berenice to Polemo king of Cilicia (20.145) but in both cases Josephus merely mentions that the spouses were circumcised. In the latter case, however, Josephus tells us (20.146) that, once Berenice left Polemo, ‘he was relieved simultaneously of his marriage and of further adherence to the Jewish way of life’ (ὁ δ’ ἅμα τοῦ τε γάμου καὶ τοῦ τοῖς ἔθεσι τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐμμένειν ἀπῆλλακτο), which indicates more than just circumcision was involved. Contrast the language of 13.4, where Jewish apostates are described as ‘those who had given up the customs of their country’ (τῶν Ἰουδαίων τοὺς ἀποστάντας τῆς πατρῴου συνηθείας).

⁵⁹⁹ 16.225. Sylleus the Arabian’s refusal to marry Salome, Herod’s sister, as they wanted him ‘to be initiated in to the customs of the Jews’ (αὐτὸν ἐγγραφῆναι τοῖς τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθεσι).

⁶⁰⁰ 18.82. The Roman matron Fulvia, the victim of confidence tricksters, who ‘had become a proselyte’ (νομίμοις προσεληλυθυῖαν τοῖς Ἰουδαϊκοῖς πεῖθουσι). Feldman (1993) p. 310 believes this to have been conversion. Cohen (1999) pp. 170-1 is not sure, and suggest adherence. However, the use of νομίμοις, a word Josephus invariably connects in a Jewish context with Jews, as analysed below, is a likely indicator of her being Jewish.

⁶⁰¹ Josephus’s captives in the Jewish War (Vita 113/149).

⁶⁰² BJ 2.454.

⁶⁰³ A conclusion also reached by Donaldson (2007) p. 489. However, Cohen’s view that ‘the expressions *to be circumcised* and *to adopt the customs of the Jews* are synonymous’ (1987) p. 421 is potentially an overstatement. None of the Pellans, Costobar or Sylleus are explicitly described as being circumcised, even

It might be thought that the choice of words in the predicate could assist and those words more indicative of prescription, rather than mere custom, could be an indication of acceptance (at least by Josephus) of an individual as Ἰουδαίος rather than mere adherence to some Jewish practices. Unfortunately Josephus does not help us here either. Jewish practices are variously described within the so-called conversion episodes as νόμιμα, νόμοι, ἔθη and πάτρια, with no obvious differentiation in meaning, except possibly where more than one word is used in relation to an episode. Even then, the expression may merely be a merism.

Outside these episodes, νόμιμα appears to be used by Josephus in the *Antiquities* in the most consistent manner, as applying in all cases concerning Jews to laws, rules or regulations.⁶⁰⁴ νόμοι too are nearly always regulations, either Jewish (from God) or, in the case of other nations, enforceable code. Occasionally though, νόμοι can mean customs of war⁶⁰⁵ or social custom, for example proskynesis or wearing sackcloth in supplication⁶⁰⁶ or waving palm wands (13.372), or can mean both law and custom, for example Jewish practices in the eyes of Persians (11.212) or Roman practices (18.236).⁶⁰⁷ ἔθη however has a much wider spectrum of meanings. In addition to its use as personal custom or habit, and national custom (i.e. non-binding practices, for example the custom of carrying a sword (18.45)), ἔθη is often used in circumstances where the word is clearly a synonym of νόμοι, or

if we strongly suspect they were (or in the case of Pella, intended to be). He makes a similar overstatement (1999, p. 226 n. 69) when he states that 13.257-8 (Idumaeans) and 13.318-9 (Ituraeans) show that circumcision sufficed for conversion. Both passages combine circumcision with a requirement to follow Jewish practices.

⁶⁰⁴ Some possible non-Jewish use as 'custom' rather than law being 1.166 (Egyptian customs), 2.45 (Egyptian customs), 18.44 (Parthian custom), 18.344 (Parthian custom).

⁶⁰⁵ For example 1.315, 6.69, 9.58, 14.304, 15.157, 16.277.

⁶⁰⁶ 10.11, 11.231, 12.300, 19.349.

⁶⁰⁷ In addition, Josephus's use on several occasions of νόμοι in *Contra Apionem* when describing Greek emulation of Jewish practice would imply that, at least in that work if not elsewhere, the word is used of sympathisers as well as converts.

νόμιμα.⁶⁰⁸ Lastly, *πάτρια*, which when used as a noun (*τὰ πάτρια*) appears to be a somewhat difficult concept to pin down and could in most cases encompass laws, customs or both.

⁶⁰⁸ For example in relation to Hebrew circumcision (1.214), Paschal sacrifice (2.313 and 14.25), transgressing the *ἔθνη* of the Hebrews and worship of God (9.95), fighting for the preservation of Hebrew *ἔθνη* by the Hasmonaeans (12.271, 280, 281, 324), edicts protecting Jewish practice (14.213, 214, 216, 223, 245, 246, 258, 260, 263, 16.35, 19.311), perversion of biblical law (16.1).

Chapter 6

Conversion in the Adiabene narrative

6.1. Introduction

The Adiabene narrative begins, as has been previously mentioned, with the statement that Helena and Izates ‘became converts (εἰς τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθη τὸν βίον μετέβαλον) in the following manner’. Albeit the narrative not only describes the conversion of these two characters, together with Izates’s brother Monobazus, but also their consequent fortunes, nearly twenty percent of the total narrative is taken up by a description of the conversion process itself as applied primarily to Izates,⁶⁰⁹ thereby showing its significance to Josephus within the overall framework. It is also this part of the narrative that has been most examined by modern scholars, because is the earliest extant statement of any length on how a person could acquire, through observance of the Jewish God’s commandments, the identity of a Jew, a Ἰουδαῖος, an identity that over the previous two hundred and fifty years appears to have mutated from exclusively ethnic to one that could include those born into non-Jewish ethnicities.⁶¹⁰

However, as shown in Chapter 5, Appendix 2, Josephus uses somewhat vague expression and inconsistent use of terminology to describe apparently similar events and processes, both within the Adiabene narrative and elsewhere in his works, when describing what are seen generally as acts of so-called conversion, making the analysis of Izates’s transformation difficult. In addition, as shown in Chapter 2, the structure of the conversion part of the narrative, with its somewhat tortuous analepsis and apparent inconsistencies,

⁶⁰⁹ 20.34-48.

⁶¹⁰ Thiessen (2011) pp. 87, 107-8 rightly cautions against an assumption that all Jews believed it was possible for non-Jews to become Jews. However he accepts that for many, if not most, it had become possible by the end of the Second Temple period.

compounds these difficulties. It is, as a consequence, a text that has given rise to a wide variety of scholarly interpretations of the precise meaning of its integral elements and has generated at times radically different routes to conclusions concerning what Josephus is telling his reader. However, of the scholars who have examined Josephus's text in detail, nearly all have concluded that the central message of the so-called 'conversion' element of the narrative is that Josephus is telling his reader that, for males, it was not possible to become a Jew without circumcision. The consensus is that, as the narrative progresses, Izates himself progresses from Gentile, to someone who adopts Jewish customs but is not a Jew while in Charax, to someone who is undoubtedly a Jew.⁶¹¹

This chapter examines in nine sections what Josephus appears to be saying, following the chronology of the narrative, in relation to the process of transformation from non-Jew to Jew, testing scholars' previous arguments, and provides a summary and conclusion. It puts forward a proposition, based both on a logical interpretation of the text and a translation of some key words that is different from that put forward by the majority of scholars, that contrary to most scholarly opinion, Josephus appears to present Izates as a Jew before his circumcision.

In addition, by reinterpreting the evidence concerning Izates's status at various points in the narrative, the chapter helps explain Josephus's purpose in inserting what at first sight appears to be a somewhat over-elaborated description of the conversion process. Rather than being a discursus of Izates's progression from Gentile to Godfearer/adherer to Jew, the conversion episode in fact reinforces a point fundamental to the entire Adiabene narrative.

⁶¹¹ The principal commentators have been McEleney (1974), Nolland (1983), Collins, (1985), Schiffman (1987), Cohen (1987) and (1999), Gilbert (1991), Feldman (1993), Schwartz (1996), Borgen (1996) and Donaldson (2007). Of these, only Borgen and Gilbert propose that Josephus tells us that Izates became a Jew before he was circumcised, and Gilbert is materially influenced by examination of evidence outside Josephus's works.

This is that Izates, through his voluntary and arguably unnecessary embrace of circumcision, performs an extraordinarily pious act in the face of danger, which merits exceptional reward by God.

Mention should be made at this point of the textual analysis in Chapter 2⁶¹² of this part of the narrative, which proposes that 20.34 to 20.48 could have come from two entirely different sources in relation to the ‘conversions’, one in Charax and the other in Adiabene. It is also possible that these two sources implicitly disagreed on Izates’s status, the first believing Izates to be a Jew upon his return to Adiabene, the second not.⁶¹³ Consequently, if Josephus had merely interpolated the two into his wider narrative without his own authorial imprint, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to determine Josephus’s view on the process, and therefore his purpose in providing this part of the narrative. As discussed in Chapter 2, it is not possible to conclude with certainty on Josephus’s sources. However, from the analysis in Chapter 5, it seems clear that the entire Adiabene narrative bears the hallmark of Josephus, both as to style and content, and therefore, notwithstanding the factual inconsistencies identified in Chapter 2, it would seem safe to analyse this part of the narrative on the basis that Josephus owned the words, irrespective of their source. As Donaldson points out, the message from the Adiabene narrative ‘is so resonant of what Josephus presents at the start of his narrative as the main lesson to be drawn from the whole work that the Izates story must be seen as carrying Josephus’s full endorsement’.⁶¹⁴

⁶¹² See pp. 25-28.

⁶¹³ Cohen (1987) pp. 424-5 suggests this as a possibility.

⁶¹⁴ Donaldson (2007) p. 337.

6.2. Helena and Izates εἰς τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθνη τὸν βίον μετέβαλον (AJ 20.17)

Josephus therefore begins the narrative as a whole with an apparently definitive statement, namely that Helena and her son Izates εἰς τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθνη τὸν βίον μετέβαλον (20.17).⁶¹⁵ What does this mean and, in particular, what does the verb μεταβάλλω signify? Since this is an introduction to the entire narrative, the outcome of which appears to be a transformation of the principal characters from non-Jew to Jew, it is reasonable to believe that the phrase, literally, ‘changed their lifestyle towards the practices of the Jews’ must mean ‘converted to Judaism’ or ‘became Jews’. Josephus uses the verb μεταβάλλω frequently in the *Antiquities*, always in connection with change. The change is mostly of mind or a particular mode of behaviour, sometimes of a physical state, or name, or circumstances, but in a few instances Josephus uses the verb to signify what appears to be a change of life or lifestyle.⁶¹⁶ In particular he uses the same verb in 13.397 to describe the offer by Alexander Jannaeus in the second century BCE to the inhabitants of Pella to εἰς τὰ πατρια τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθνη μεταβαλεῖσθαι (adopt the national customs of the Jews) or face destruction, a very similar offer made earlier by John Hyrcanus to the Idumaeans, who ‘submitted to circumcision and to making their manner of life conform in all other respects to that of the Jews’ and who ‘from that time on ... have continued to be Jews’ (13.257-8).⁶¹⁷ It would therefore seem reasonably clear that Izates and Helena εἰς τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθνη τὸν βίον μετέβαλον means that they changed from non-Jew to Jew. The question then becomes: how and when did they do that?

⁶¹⁵ All translations from the Greek are from Louis H. Feldman’s translation of the *Antiquities* in LCL 456, unless otherwise indicated.

⁶¹⁶ For example 1.72 (Israelites abandoning their fathers’ customs), 1.155 (Abraham’s religious revolution), 8.127 (Solomon turning to worship foreign gods).

⁶¹⁷ Trans. Marcus LCL 365. As did the Ituraeans (13.318). Josephus would lead us to believe that the Idumaeans were thereafter considered Jews by both the Judean population (*BJ* 4.265) and from their own perspective (*BJ* 4.275).

6.3. Izates in Charax Spasini and the meaning of τὸν θεὸν σέβειν (*AJ* 20.34-35)

In this section, the status of Izates as a result of activity in Charax is examined. Initially, we are told that a Jewish merchant named Ananias visited the king of Charax Spasini's wives and 'ἐδίδασκεν αὐτάς τὸν θεὸν σέβειν, ὡς Ἰουδαίοις πάτρον ἦν' (translated by Feldman as 'taught them to worship God after the manner of the Jewish tradition') (20.34) and subsequently 'καὶ δὴ δι' αὐτῶν εἰς γνῶσιν ἀφικόμενος τῷ Ἰζάτῃ κάκεῖνον ὁμοίως συνανέπεισεν (it was through their agency that he was brought to the notice of Izates, whom he similarly won over with the co-operation of the women)' (20.35).⁶¹⁸

So, what process is going on here? In particular, what is the meaning of Josephus's use of τὸν θεὸν σέβειν to describe the activity undertaken? Schiffman, in an influential article that was published thirty years ago, appears to believe that the activity in Charax Spasini was not 'conversion', in other words that Izates was not at this stage a Jew, but rather that τὸν θεὸν σέβειν means that Izates was in the intermediate state of Godfearing, in other words a sympathiser who followed Jewish customs but did not consider himself, nor was considered by others, to be a Jew.⁶¹⁹ Reynolds and Tannenbaum⁶²⁰ agree with Schiffman, seeing a direct correlation between Josephus's use of the phrase and other uses of σεβόμενοι/φοβούμενοι (τὸν θεόν) in Acts and inscriptions from Panticapeum and Aphrodisias and several other more problematic inscriptions, which appear to indicate that the phrase was sometimes used in antiquity in such a manner.⁶²¹ The extent of the phenomenon of Godfearers or Jewish sympathisers in antiquity is beyond the scope of this

⁶¹⁸ συνανέπεισεν might alternatively be translated as '[Ananias] joined in the women in persuading', an interesting alternative, as it implies even less formality than might otherwise be supposed.

⁶¹⁹ Schiffman (1987) pp. 302-3.

⁶²⁰ Reynolds and Tannenbaum (1987) p. 50.

⁶²¹ See Schürer (1973-1986) vol. III.1 pp. 164-172 for an analysis of the evidence.

thesis⁶²² but, in any event, I do not believe it is necessary to attempt to draw analogies from outside Josephus's writings to determine the nature of proceedings at Charax Spasini, firstly because Josephus does not elsewhere describe non-Jews who adopt Jewish practices with the phrase τὸν θεὸν σέβειν and secondly because, where he does use the phrase τὸν θεὸν σέβειν, he is inevitably referring to people who are unequivocally either Jews, or pagans, or Samaritans.

That Josephus points in his writings to people who acted in some way like Jews, or sympathised with them, but were not Jews, cannot be in doubt. In the *Jewish War* Book 2 (BJ 2.463), when recounting the massacres of Jews in Syria prior to the Revolt in 66 CE, he writes of Judaizers (ἰουδαῖζοντας) as an ambiguous element (τὸ παρ'ἐκάστοις ἀμφίβολον) and a mixed community (μεμιγμένον).⁶²³ Elsewhere in the *Jewish War* Book 2 (BJ 2.560), we learn of Gentiles in Damascus whose wives had been brought across to Jewish practices (ὕπηγμένας τῇ Ἰουδαϊκῇ θρησκείᾳ), an ambiguous phrase which Thackeray⁶²⁴ sees as denoting female converts, but which Cohen⁶²⁵ sees as possibly meaning sympathisers. In the *Jewish War* Book 7 (BJ 7.45), the Jews of Antioch, prior to the revolt, 'were constantly drawing to Jewish practices a great multitude of Greeks and made them in some way a part of their community (ἀεὶ τε προσαγόμενοι ταῖς θρησκείαις πολὺ πλῆθος Ἑλλήνων, κακείνους τρόπῳ τινὶ μοῖραν αὐτῶν πεποίηντο)'.⁶²⁶ As identified in Chapter 3, Josephus also tells us that non-Jews offered sacrifices and prayers at the

⁶²² For a general discussion of Jewish sympathisers in antiquity, see Feldman (1993) pp. 342-382, Cohen (1987) and (1999) pp. 140-174, Donaldson (2007) pp. 469-482.

⁶²³ Cohen (1999) p. 184 n. 38 points out that the passage is not clear and the ambiguous element may be a different group from the Judaizers. For these purposes, it matters little: the point is that at least some people who behaved like Jews were not Jews.

⁶²⁴ Thackeray LCL 203.

⁶²⁵ Cohen (1999) p. 185.

⁶²⁶ Author's translation. These were *not* converts (see Goodman (1994) p. 87 n. 58, contra Cohen (1987) p. 417) because of the use of τρόπῳ τινὶ.

Temple.⁶²⁷ There are also a number of references to Greeks' adoption or approval of Jewish practices in *Contra Apionem*,⁶²⁸ albeit it is not possible from the context to assess whether there was adoption of, or adherence to, Jewish practice without so-called conversion, or whether, at least in some cases, these Greeks were converts, in other words, both thought of themselves as Jews, and were accepted by at least their local indisputably Jewish community as Jews. In none of these cases is the phrase τὸν θεὸν σέβειν used.

So what does it appear to mean when Josephus *does* use the phrase τὸν θεὸν/τὸ θεῖον σέβειν or εὐσεβεῖν? Josephus uses the phrase with the verb σέβω/σέβομαι 14 times in the *Jewish Antiquities* (including three times in the Adiabene narrative) but not elsewhere in his works.⁶²⁹ His use of τὸν θεόν/τὸ θεῖον σέβειν outside the Adiabene narrative encompasses six examples of unequivocal Jewish worship, and one of pagan worship. Otherwise the phrase occurs twice to describe the Samaritan claim that they should be allowed to join in building the Temple because, they said, 'we worship God no less than they [the Jews]' (σεβόμεθα γὰρ οὐκ ἔλαττον ἐκείνων τὸν θεόν) (11.85), a request rejected by Zerubbabel who nonetheless allowed them to σέβειν τὸν θεόν in the Temple (11.87). The phrase also occurs once in a neutral way, when the Gentile speaker Aristaeas, in one of Josephus's many universalistic asides, claims that 'they and we, [Jews and Greeks], σεβόμεθα the God who created the universe',⁶³⁰ and once (14.110) which requires some analysis.

⁶²⁷ 3.318 and 8.116. There may also be a reference to such people in *BJ* 5.15, where Josephus contrasts ἐπιχωρίους (native Jews) with ξένους (strangers) as two separate groups coming to the Temple.

⁶²⁸ *C. Ap.* 1.166-7, 2.210, 2.261, 2.280-4. See also *AJ* 3.217.

⁶²⁹ Jewish worship: *AJ* 4.318 (τὸ σέβειν), 5.198 (σέβειν τὸν θεόν), 8.280 (τὸν ἴδιον θεὸν σεβομένης), 8.418 (τὸ θεῖον σέβειν), 9.264 (σέβειν τὸν θεόν), 10.50 (σέβειν τὸν πατριον θεόν). Pagan Worship: 3.179 (τὸ θεῖον σέβειν). Samaritans: 11.85 (σεβόμεθα γὰρ οὐκ ἔλαττον ἐκείνων τὸν θεόν), 11.87 (σέβειν τὸν θεόν). Worship by Greeks and Jews: 12.22 (τὸν θεὸν σεβόμεθα). Worship at the Temple 14.110 (πάντων σεβομένων τὸν θεόν). In the Adiabene narrative: 20.34 (τὸν θεὸν σέβειν), 20.41 (τὸ θεῖον σέβειν), 20.88 (τὸν θεὸν ὃν σέβει). In addition, Josephus uses the phrase τὴν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβειαν in 20.75.

⁶³⁰ *AJ* 12.22 (τὸν θεὸν σεβόμεθα).

Before such analysis, it is also useful briefly to consider Josephus's use of the words τὸν θεὸν/τὸ θεῖον with εὐσεβεῖν (or its noun and adjective cognates εὐσέβεια and εὐσεβής). These phrases occur 35 times, 27 times in the *Antiquities*, four times in the *Jewish War*, three times in *Contra Apionem* and once in the *Vita*.⁶³¹ In relation to εὐσεβέω, in the *Antiquities* and the *Jewish War*, all references are either to Jewish piety or to foreign philo-semitic rulers expressing 'piety' by acceding to Jewish requests or approving of the Jewish God. In the *Contra Apionem*, one reference is to Pythagoras's piety (*C. Ap.* 1.162), one to the merits of Jewish piety (*C. Ap.* 1.212) and one to Apion's claim that the Jews are *not* pious (presumably therefore not worshiping Egyptian gods) (*C. Ap.* 2.125). There is one essentially universalistic reference in the *Vita* 113, where, upon the capture of Agrippa II's nobles from Trachonitis who are in danger of forcible circumcision by Josephus's forces as a requirement for avoiding death, Josephus allows that δεῖν ἕκαστον κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ προαίρεσιν τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβεῖν, translated by Thackeray as 'everyone should worship God in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience'.⁶³² Additionally, in all the examples quoted, both of σέβειν and εὐσεβεῖν, there is no distinction between τὸν θεόν and τὸ θεῖον. Josephus uses both phrases to describe religious activity of Jews and non-Jews alike.

Josephus also uses the phrase τὸν θεόν/τὸ θεῖον σέβειν in *AJ* 14.110, when describing the provenance of the Temple's wealth: πάντων τῶν κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην Ἰουδαίων καὶ

⁶³¹ Jewish: 2.196 (ἐπ'εὐσεβείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ), 4.181 (εὐσεβείας περὶ τὸν θεόν), 7.384 (εὐσεβεῖ πρὸς τὸν θεόν), 8.13 (πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβείας), 8.124 (τῇ περὶ τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβείᾳ), 8.196 (πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβείᾳ), 8.208 (τῆς εὐσεβείας πρὸς τὸν θεόν), 8.280 (τὸ θεῖον εὐσεβεῖ), 9.16 (τῇ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον εὐσεβείᾳ), 9.222 (ἡ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσέβεια), 9.236 (εὐσεβῆς πρὸς τὸν θεόν), 9.276 (ἐπὶ τῇ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον εὐσεβείᾳ), 10.45 (τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβεῖν), 10.51 (περὶ τὸ θεῖον εὐσεβείας), 10.68 (τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβεῖν), 12.290 (πρὸς τὸ θεῖον εὐσεβεῖν), 14.65 (περὶ τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβείας), 15.375 (πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβείαν), 16.172 (εὐσεβείας πρὸς τὸ θεῖον), 18.117 (πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβείᾳ), 18.127 (πρὸς τὸ θεῖον εὐσεβειῶν), 20.100 (πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβείᾳ), *BJ* 2.128 (πρὸς τὸ θεῖον εὐσεβεῖς), *BJ* 2.139 (εὐσεβήσιν τὸ θεῖον), *BJ* 7.264 (πρὸς θεὸν εὐσεβείας), *BJ* 7.267 (τῆς πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβείας), *C. Ap.* 1.212 (τὴν πρὸς θεὸν εὐσέβειαν). Philo-semitic rulers: 11.120 (πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσέβειάν) (Cyrus), 11.132 (τὴν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσέβειαν) (Cyrus), 12.52 (πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσέβειαν) (Ptolemy), 12.150 (τὴν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσέβειαν) (Antiochus), 13.242 (τῇ πρὸς τὸ θεῖον εὐσεβείᾳ) (Antiochus). Pagan: *C. Ap.* 1.162 (τῇ περὶ τὸ θεῖον εὐσεβείᾳ) (piety of Pythagoras), *C. Ap.* 2.125 (τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβεῖν) (worship pagan gods). Pantheistic: *Vita* 113 (τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβεῖν).

⁶³² LCL 186.

σεβομένων τὸν θεόν, ἔτι δὲ καὶ τῶν ἀπο τῆς Ἀσίας καὶ τῆς Εὐρώπης εἰς αὐτο συμφερόντων ἐκ πολλῶν πάνυ χρόνων translated by Marcus, the Loeb edition translator, as ‘for all the Jews throughout the habitable world, and those who worshipped God, even those from Asia and Europe, had been contributing to it for a very long time’.⁶³³ Marcus believes there to have been two separate groups of people, the latter whom he calls ‘pagan semi-proselytes’.⁶³⁴ There is actually an argument that σεβομένων without the definite article is a descriptor adjective for Ἰουδαίων (‘pious Jews’), rather than a separate group of people,⁶³⁵ but even if there are actually two classes of people, this is in itself slim evidence that in this particular case σεβομένων means Godfearers, as opposed to pagans, who were revering or paying respect to the Jewish God (as the Samaritans are allowed to do by Zerubbabel) and contributing to Temple coffers, of which there are numerous examples.⁶³⁶ In short, 14.110 does not help the argument that τὸν θεὸν σέβειν in 20.34 refers to adherers, rather than converts.

The other Josephan reference that has been used in aid of the argument that his employment of σέβειν in 20.34 is an indicator of non-Jewish sympathiser-like behaviour is the use in 20.195 of θεοσεβῆς in describing the philo-Jewish behaviour of Poppaea, Nero’s wife.⁶³⁷ That she was sympathetic to the argument of the Jewish delegates to Rome in around 62 CE is not in doubt. However, that she was enamoured of Jewish customs and practices seems doubtful. Josephus uses the word four other times in the *Antiquities*, twice (7.130 and 7.153) to describe King David, once to describe Judas Maccabaeus (12.284) and once (14.308) to describe Hyrcanus revitalising pious Jews, in all four cases clearly signifying their general

⁶³³ LCL 489.

⁶³⁴ *ibid.* p. 59 note a, and Marcus (1952) p. 247.

⁶³⁵ Lake (1933) p. 85.

⁶³⁶ See generally Schürer (1973-1986) vol. II pp. 312 – 313, Mason (2008) p. 34 nn. 304-306 and p. 314 n. 2571.

⁶³⁷ Cohen (1987) p. 419 takes this view, as does Feldman (1993) pp. 351-2.

religiosity.⁶³⁸ He uses it once in *Contra Apionem* (2.140) to describe the religiosity of Egyptian priests. The use of θεοσεβής to describe Poppaea indicates that she was a religious woman, but tells us nothing about which religion she followed.⁶³⁹

There are also, as mentioned earlier, two other examples of the use of τὸν θεὸν/τὸ θεῖον σέβειν within the Adiabene narrative, 20.41 and 20.88. In the first instance, it is used by Ananias (20.41) during the Izates conversion narrative to argue that Izates can τὸ θεῖον σέβειν without circumcision, if he is truly zealous for all the [other] ancestral practices of the Jews (ἔιγε πάντως κέκρικε ζηλοῦν τὰ πάτρια τῶν Ἰουδαίων), in other words even if he falls short of complete observance. The episode is discussed at length later in this chapter but, at this stage, the salient point is that in order for this to mean that Izates was, at this stage, a non-Jewish sympathiser, it would have to be argued that he would have been a non-Jewish sympathiser even if he *had* been circumcised, a somewhat odd view, in that he would have willingly done everything possible to become Jewish, unless it can be argued that Jewish practices were demanded by God of non-Jews, a proposition that is also examined later in this chapter.

In the latter additional instance of τὸν θεὸν/τὸ θεῖον σέβειν within the Adiabene narrative (20.88), Izates is threatened by a messenger from Vologeses, king of Parthia, that even the God that he worshipped (τὸν θεὸν ὃν σέβει) would not be able to save him. This is at the denouement of the narrative, Izates's miraculous victory over Vologeses's forces, as aided by God, when to be anything other than Jewish would vitiate the entire purpose of the narrative. Josephus also uses the noun construct εὐσεβειαν from the verb σέβω/σέβομαι in 20.75. The context, that of a decision by Monobazus, Izates's brother, and their relatives, to

⁶³⁸ Also possibly 9.260 to describe Hezekiah, per ms. MSPE.

⁶³⁹ A position taken by Smallwood (1976) p. 278 n. 79 and p. 205 n. 15. Williams (1988) p. 109 also does not believe she was a Godfearer, but does believe that θεοσεβής indicates that she had Jewish sympathies.

abandon their ancestral religion and ‘adopt the practices of the Jews’ (Feldman’s LCL translation of ἔθεσι χρῆσθαι τοῖς Ἰουδαίων), is based on the fact that Izates had won the admiration of all men because of his pious worship of God (τὴν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσέβειαν). This is also at a time in the narrative when Izates is undoubtedly Jewish and therefore to believe that σέβω/σέβομαι in paragraph 20.34 indicates the actions of a non-Jew is to believe that Josephus uses the verb in two materially different ways in the same narrative, a seemingly unlikely hypothesis.⁶⁴⁰ In conclusion therefore, Josephus is not talking about Godfearers when he uses τὸν θεὸν σέβειν.

Schwartz⁶⁴¹ explains the events in Charax Spasini rather differently. He believes that the verb συνανέπεισεν in 20.35 means ‘urged’, rather than ‘persuaded’, as ἔπειθεν appears to do later on in the Adiabene narrative in 20.69 (Vardanes the Parthian attempted to persuade Izates to make war on the Romans), making the meaning of the narrative in 20.35 that Ananias and the women failed to persuade Izates to adopt Jewish customs, and that he was only persuaded on seeing that his mother was pleased with them (20.38). Schwartz’s view does not seem to be supported by looking elsewhere in Josephus for his use of πείθω. Firstly, Josephus uses πείθω in 20.69 to mean ‘urge’, with an antithetical οὐ μὲν ἔπειθεν (‘but did not persuade’) immediately following in 20.70, a device used on five other occasions in the *Antiquities*.⁶⁴² Elsewhere in the *Antiquities*, Josephus does occasionally use πείθω to mean ‘to urge’ but, as in 20.70, he always then directly and immediately tells his readers whether the ‘urging’ was successful or not, even if the means is not by the double use of πείθω.⁶⁴³ No such construction is present in 20.35, the paragraph under consideration, and, as we will

⁶⁴⁰ Schiffman (1987) p. 304 recognises the inherent contradiction in seeing Izates’s τὴν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσέβειαν as indicating ‘a semi-proselyte’ but accepting Monobazus’s act, based on Izates’s state, as conversion, but does not attempt an explanation. Cohen (1987) p. 419 implicitly believes that there are two different uses.

⁶⁴¹ Schwartz (1996) p. 266.

⁶⁴² 13.216 and 13.217, 14.285, 14.341, 20.123 and 20.124, 20.142 and 20.143.

⁶⁴³ Examples include 1.74, 1.216, 2.291, 12.164, 12.300, 15.168, 17.55, 20.62.

see, the reader has to wait until 20.38 for an answer and then only to know it by inference. This is not Josephus's style.

Secondly, to argue, as Schwartz does, that ὁμοίως, when combined with συνανέπεισεν (20.35), means that Ananias taught (ἐδίδασκεν) Jewish ways to the women of Charax (but they did not listen), and urged Izates to adopt these practices, but he *similarly* didn't want to, seems unlikely.⁶⁴⁴ Most naturally, ὁμοίως appears to be there to describe similar events, namely successful persuasion of the women and Izates. Why would Josephus narrate a tale of abject failure when the whole Adiabene narrative is about the attractiveness of being a Jew? If he had believed that the first attempts at instruction had been entirely unsuccessful, he would have simply omitted what is now presented as paragraph 20.34 and the first two lines of paragraph 20.35.

In summary, therefore, at this stage, I would argue that (1) Josephus does not use τὸν θεὸν σέβειν as a term of art, (2) that Izates and the women of Charax had been brought towards the state of being a Jew to the same degree (3) based on the preponderance of Josephan usage, it might be said that if Izates wasn't revering pagan gods, he is likely to have been a Jew revering the Jewish God and (4) it is a reasonable assumption that Josephus uses τὸν θεόν/τὸ θεῖον σέβειν three times in the Adiabene narrative in the same way. In these circumstances, it is entirely possible that Izates had become a Jew while in Charax.⁶⁴⁵ However, further evidence comes from the succeeding paragraphs of the text.

⁶⁴⁴ Schwartz (1996) p. 266.

⁶⁴⁵ Borgen (1996) p. 53 also believes that, in Ananias's judgement, Izates comes back from Charax as a Jew, as does Gilbert (1991) pp. 308-310. This position is also taken by Neusner (1964) p. 62 and Goldenberg (1997) p. 60 but both without reasoning. Conversely, Feldman (1993), p. 329 believes that Izates had not become a Jew at that point, as does Cohen (1987) p. 419 n. 28, p. 420 n. 34 and (1999) p. 151, but neither directly link his behaviour in Charax Spasini to Godfearers. Nolland (1983) pp. 193-4, McKnight (1991) p. 80 and Goodman (1994) p. 87, all believe he was not, at this stage, a Jew. McEleney (1974) is unclear. He appears to believe that Izates does not become Jewish as a result of the process in Charax (p. 323, 325) but also appears to argue (p. 328, 332) that the Adiabene narrative shows that an uncircumcised proselyte is possible. Collins (1985) pp. 178-9 is also not clear on Izates's status at this point.

6.4. Helena's conversion and the significance of ὁμοίως (AJ 20.35)

In the next section, Helena, independently but ὁμοίως, had been instructed by another Jew and was 'brought over to their laws (εἰς τοὺς ἐκείνων μετακεκομίσθαι νόμους)'. What does this mean? In particular, how significant is the word ὁμοίως, which appears to form a bridge between Charax and Adiabene?

Most commentators assume that this means that Helena became a Jew.⁶⁴⁶ What can we deduce from Josephus's choice of words? In the first instance Josephus uses the same verb, διδάσκω, for the process in Charax Spasini and to Helena in Adiabene. Schwartz⁶⁴⁷ argues that the difference lies in the overt statement that Helena was brought over to their laws, but no such statement exists for the women of Charax. True, but what then is the purpose of the ὁμοίως which appears to relate to the whole phrase and not just the teaching? Were it only to refer to the teaching, one would have expected the insertion of ἀλλά, 'but', between the teaching and the acceptance of the laws.

Although this is the only metaphorical use by Josephus of the verb μετακομίζω, it is clear from its other uses by Josephus that this is not mere dalliance with Jewish customs, but transference of allegiance.⁶⁴⁸ However, Schwartz conversely believes that Helena did not become a Jew, because, unlike a man, she could not be circumcised, and could only 'do what Jews do'.⁶⁴⁹ The problem with this analysis is that Schwartz focuses on the description of Jewish practices adopted by Helena (20.34-35, 20.38) rather than looking at the wider

⁶⁴⁶ Schiffman (1987) p. 303 asserts that the phrase 'is proof that Helena ... indeed did convert in accordance with Jewish law'. Feldman (1993) pp. 157, 329-30 also assumes that Helena is Jewish henceforth, as does Goodman (2007a) p. 171.

⁶⁴⁷ (1996) p. 266.

⁶⁴⁸ 7.78, 7.84, 7.200, 8.99, 8.101, 13.210; *Vita* 404.

⁶⁴⁹ Schwartz (2007) p. 98. Cohen (1999) pp. 170-1 poses the same question as to whether women could become Jews but believes 'the answer is not clear'.

narrative. In the first instance, the narrative introduces Helena and Izates (note Helena and Izates, not Izates and Helena) as εἰς τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθη τὸν βίον μετέβαλον. The impression here is of equality and, for both of them, not a mere flirtation with Jewish customs, as they apparently changed their lives. There is also other evidence as to her status. The narrative later, without any intervening religious experience by Helena, mentions her good deeds for the people of Jerusalem in a context that makes clear she is a Jew.⁶⁵⁰ It seems therefore safe to conclude that Helena considered herself to be, and was considered by others to be, a Jew, in other words ‘conversion’ rather than ‘adherence’.

The argument that Izates’s status in Charax was already Jewish is then strengthened by considering Josephus’s use of the word ὁμοίως twice in paragraph 20.35, as identified above. Not only is Izates *similarly* persuaded to join the women of Charax Spasini but Helena is *similarly* carried across. The double use cannot be accidental. Josephus appears to have a very definite structure in place to tell the story and the only rational explanation of the double use is that all three parties (women, Izates and Helena) underwent the same process with the same outcome.

6.5. Izates in Adiabene – The decision to be circumcised and the significance of μεταθέσθαι (AJ 20.38)

Izates then returns to Adiabene, accompanied at his insistence by his new friend Ananias, and we move to the first climax of the narrative, namely that Izates πυθόμενος δὲ πάνυ τοῖς Ἰουδαίων ἔθεσιν χαίρειν τὴν μητέρα τὴν ἑαυτοῦ, ἔσπευσε καὶ αὐτὸς εἰς ἐκεῖνα [ἔθη] μεταθέσθαι νομίζων τε μὴ ἂν εἶναι βεβαίως Ἰουδαῖος, εἰ μὴ περιτέμοιτο, πράττειν ἦν ἕτοιμος (translated by Feldman as ‘When Izates had learned that his mother was very much

⁶⁵⁰ 20.49-53.

pleased with the Jewish religion, he was zealous to convert to it himself, and since he considered that he would not be genuinely a Jew unless he was circumcised, he was ready to act accordingly' (20.38). For Feldman and also Schiffman,⁶⁵¹ this is the proof that, until circumcision, Izates did not, and indeed could not, consider himself to be Jewish.

Initially, the Schiffman/Feldman view does appear to be a logical one, based on the translation of the word μεταθέσθαι, a verb denoting change, as 'convert', thus making illogical any assumption that Izates had become a Jew while in Charax. At first glance, why would Josephus say that Izates would want to in some way *change* to Jewish customs, if he had already acquired them in Charax, unless what had taken place in Charax was only partial?⁶⁵² However, conversely if we then accept the arguments outlined above, regarding the apparent equality of experience of Helena and Izates (the *ὁμοίως* argument), do we not have a paradox of two apparently inconsistent statements? In this respect, Helena's experience does not help us *per se* as the verb used to describe her experience, μετακομίζω, neither supports nor detracts from any analysis of Izates's process of μετατίθημι.⁶⁵³

In fact, there is an explanation which solves the apparent paradox, and I do not believe that, up to this point, we are obliged to conclude that Izates was *not* Jewish. The key lies in the meaning of μεταθέσθαι. Feldman translates μεταθέσθαι as 'convert' but in fact elsewhere in the eleven different instances of the verb (excluding 20.38) found in the *Antiquities*, Josephus appears to use the verb μετατίθημι in a variety of different ways, but never 'convert', as can be seen from Chapter 5, Appendix 2. In some cases, used transitively, the

⁶⁵¹ Schiffman (1987) p. 303. Mason (2003) p. 75 n. 544 agrees.

⁶⁵² Reasoning adopted by Schwartz (1996) p. 267.

⁶⁵³ For Schiffman (1987) p. 303, the use of εἰς ἐκεῖνα (ἐθνη) μεταθέσθαι to describe Izates's actions apparently proves a desire for conversion: 'This idiom, as we have already established in regard to Helena, denotes conversion in accordance with Jewish law they all knew that without undergoing circumcision, Izates would not be a Jew'. This explanation is hard to follow. In particular, Schiffman appears to equate μετακομίζω (Helena) with μετατίθημι (Izates).

verb appears to mean physical transference⁶⁵⁴ or metaphorical transference.⁶⁵⁵ It can also mean either abandon or change.⁶⁵⁶ However, Josephus also uses the verb as a transitive verb with τὴν γνώμην meaning to change one's mind⁶⁵⁷ and also, in two cases, 5.200 and 9.265, intransitively, without the predicate τὴν γνώμην or equivalent, to mean to change one's mind and, specifically, repent, where the repentance is of not acting in accordance with God's laws.⁶⁵⁸ Its intransitive meaning of 'to change one's mind', although rare in Josephus, can be found in other classical authors, including Plato, Aristotle, Euripides, Menander, Polybius, Epictetus and Cassius Dio.⁶⁵⁹ This concept of 'mind change', indeed possibly 'repentance', seems to fit much better with the surrounding context, namely of a Jew not obeying the commandments, than the concept of 'conversion'. If this translation is accepted, then the καὶ in ἔσπευσε καὶ αὐτὸς εἰς ἐκεῖνα μεταθέσθαι is best translated as 'furthermore' and in fact links to the previous sentence, where Izates disposes of his troublesome relatives in a gentlemanly fashion, rather than the preceding clause concerning his mother. The effect of this is to link Izates's piety in dealing with his relatives (to do otherwise and kill them or keep them in chains is described by Josephus as impious) to his further piety in wanting to be circumcised.

In addition, both Feldman and Schiffman translate βεβαίως as *genuinely*, thus aiding their interpretation of events. The word occurs elsewhere in its adverbial form thirteen times in

⁶⁵⁴ 10.33 (removing riches to Babylon) and 19.305 (removal of a statue).

⁶⁵⁵ 1.22 (transfer of vices to the gods), 12.387 (transfer of honour to another house).

⁶⁵⁶ 5.110 (abandon crimes), 13.301 (change government to kingdom).

⁶⁵⁷ 8.208 (μετατίθησι τὴν αὐτοῦ γνώμην), 15.9 (μεταθεῖναι ἂν τὰς γνώμας), 20.123 (μεταθέσθαι τὸν λογισμὸν). See also Vita 165 (μετατίθενται τὰς γνώμας).

⁶⁵⁸ 5.200: the impious Israelites are subjected by God to slavery by the Canaanites, until, ἵνα μεταθέμενοι τοῦ λοιποῦ σωφρονῶσιν ('they might change their ways and thenceforward be wise') (trans. Thackeray & Marcus LCL 490); 9.265: καὶ τοὺς προφήτας προλέγοντας ἃ πείσονται μὴ μεταθέμενοι πρὸς τὴν εὐσέβειαν τοῦ θεοῦ ('and their prophets foretold what they would suffer if they did not alter their course to one of piety toward God') (trans. Marcus LCL 326).

⁶⁵⁹ Plat. *Resp.* 334e, 345b.; *Grg.* 493d; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 11.2; Eurip. *Rhes.* 131; Men. *Pk.* 48; Polyb. *Hist.* 27.1.9, 27.9.6; Epictetus *Discourses* 2.15.17, 2.20.31; Cass. Dio 44.44.2, 61b.4.4, 64.11.2. However, it would appear that Josephus is the only author to have used μετατίθημι in the middle voice when joining it to εἰς in the predicate.

the *Antiquities* and in four of these cases the better translation is indeed *genuinely* or *truly*⁶⁶⁰ but in all other cases, it is clear from the context that the English translation should be *securely*, meaning the opposite of *insecurely*, usually describing a frame of mind about a person's position as ruler.⁶⁶¹ If this latter meaning is adopted, the translation of 20.38 then becomes as follows:

Once Izates had learned that his mother was exceedingly pleased with Jewish practices, he himself was furthermore keen to change his mind about them, and thinking himself not to be secure in his Jewish identity if he was not circumcised, he was ready to act accordingly.

The change of the mind in this instance is that formerly he saw circumcision as optional, now he considered it mandatory.

6.6. Helena's and Ananias's reaction to Izates's decision (AJ 20.39-20.41)

The conclusion reached so far, namely that Izates is seen by Josephus as already having become a Jew on his return from Charax, relies on three key arguments. Firstly that τὸν θεόν/τὸ θεῖον σέβειν is not Godfearing and means 'worship as a Jew', because in relation to Godfearing it has no prior use in the *Antiquities* as such (the argument used in favour of translating the phrase as 'Godfearing' or 'adhering' in AJ 14.110 seems weak) and the phrase is used throughout the Adiabene text, including when the royal family is undoubtedly Jewish. Secondly, the use of ὁμοίως when describing Helena's transformation to a state of being undoubtedly a Jew links back to Izates's state in Charax. Thirdly, it is argued that that εἰς ἐκεῖνα [ἔθνη] μεταθέσθαι means 'to change his mind about these

⁶⁶⁰ 3.223 (Israelites truly worshipping God), 6.59 (true friendship), 17.5 (royal power would truly fall to Antipater), 17.236 (Caesar had, in reality, confirmed the kingship on Archelaus).

⁶⁶¹ 2.345 (Israelites securely delivered), 4.58 and 4.66 (Aaron secure in the High Priesthood), 7.94, 7.255, 8.21, 13.404, 14.12 (David, Absalom, Solomon, Salome and Hyrcanus respectively secure in their rule), 14.88 (Judeans securely inhabiting cities).

practices’. How then should we analyse the next phase of the narrative, namely the apparently contradictory advice given to Izates by Ananias and Eleazar?

In the first instance, neither Helena, Izates’s mother, nor Ananias were pleased by Izates’s intention to be circumcised. Turning first to Helena, she tried to dissuade him saying his subjects would not tolerate a king who ‘was devoted to rites that were strange and foreign to themselves (ξένων ἐπιθυμήσειεν καὶ ἀλλοτρίων αὐτοῖς ἐθῶν)’ (20.39). And following straight on, Ananias was none too pleased about this decision either, threatening to leave him should he go ahead because Ananias too was concerned and was fearful for his own life should it become known that he had instructed the king in unseemly practices (ἀπρεπῶν ἔργων) (20.41).

In respect of Helena’s concerns, Nolland suggests that ‘the plurals merely provide a more generalized formulation. In each case circumcision is specifically in mind’.⁶⁶² There are a number of possible interpretations that stem from this assumption. In the first instance, Helena’s words could be interpreted as meaning that the act of circumcision would lead his subjects to discover that he practised a variety of strange rites. The problem is that this interpretation makes little sense. Presumably whether or not Izates was fond of the gymnasium, his eschewal of pork and observance of the Sabbath would in any event have been noticeable.

Alternatively, is the reader invited to believe that Helena’s concern is that his subjects would put up with other strange rites but not that of circumcision? This also seems unlikely.

Although the Romans found circumcision uncivilised⁶⁶³ but abstinence from pork merely

⁶⁶² Nolland (1981) p. 193 n. 76.

⁶⁶³ To the point in the early second century CE of banning it (see Smallwood (1959, 1961)). See Chapter 7 pp. 218-222 for further analysis of this.

quirky,⁶⁶⁴ there is substantial evidence that circumcision in the Near East was not confined merely to Jews⁶⁶⁵ and therefore it is perhaps stretching credulity to believe that the act of circumcision alone amongst Jewish practices would have been a theological Rubicon in Adiabene.

As a variation on the second interpretation, some scholars have interpreted Helena's words as meaning that Izates would not until that point in the narrative have fallen foul of public sentiment because his subjects would know that, without circumcision, he was not a Jew.⁶⁶⁶ So far in this analysis, we have reason to doubt that lack of circumcision was an absolute bar on becoming Jewish, but even if it were, it seems unlikely that that Josephus is telling us that Izates's subjects were experts on the matter of Jewish identity.

A more likely interpretation is that Josephus would like his reader to perceive that Helena did indeed mean the plural and that Izates's subjects may well have put up with the dowager Queen practising strange rites, but the King was another matter.⁶⁶⁷ That Jewish rites generally were likely to be unacceptable to Izates's subjects would not come as a surprise to the observant reader, for Josephus has already said in Book 18 of the *Antiquities* that the Babylonians hated the Jews because of the contrariety of their laws.⁶⁶⁸

At first glance, this plural interpretation is not strictly logical, as it is the decision to be circumcised that prompted Helena's outburst, in an environment where presumably Izates had been practising some Jewish customs in Adiabene (as well as Charax, where we know

⁶⁶⁴ Philo *Leg.* 361. The Emperor Gaius's question to Philo as to why Jews didn't eat pork provoked laughter from those around.

⁶⁶⁵ See Cohen (1999), pp. 44-46 for a survey. See also 1.214 (Arabs circumcised in 13th year), 8.262 (Ethiopians, Egyptians, Phoenicians and Syrians), *C. Ap.* 1.169-171 (Colchians, Egyptians, Ethiopians, Phoenicians and Syrians), *C. Ap.* 2.141-2 (Egyptian priests).

⁶⁶⁶ Nolland (1983) p. 193, Collins (1985) p. 178, Donaldson (2007) p. 336.

⁶⁶⁷ A position also taken by Schwartz (1996) pp. 269-70, who sees the statements as genuinely generalised.

⁶⁶⁸ 18.371.

he did) before deciding to be circumcised, and these, as has been said, would surely have been noticed.

However, we have corroboration for the plural dislike. Ananias himself talks about problems if found to be teaching unseemly practices (plural) (20.41).⁶⁶⁹ The plural is repeated by Helena in 20.47 where she warns that his subjects would not submit to government by ‘a man who was a devotee of foreign practices’ (ἄνδρα τῶν παρ’ἑτέροις ζηλωτὴν ἔθῳ). This plural is reinforced in 20.77, where Josephus tells us that the nobles wished to punish Izates, because ‘he had come to hate their way of life (μισήσαντα τὰ παρ’αὐτοῖς ἔθῃ)’. In addition, in 20.81, Izates’s nobles petitioned Vologeses, the Parthian king, to remove Izates because ‘they said they had come to loathe their own king, who had overthrown traditions and had become enamoured of foreign practices (μισεῖν γὰρ ἔλεγον τὸν ἑαυτῶν βασιλέα καταλύσαντα μὲν τὰ πάτρια, ξένων δ’ἑραστήν ἔθῳ γενόμενον)’.

In conclusion, the construction of the circumcision episode seems artificial. Logic should dictate that Helena would have been upset when she first saw Izates’s enthusiasm for Jewish practices upon his return from Charax. Josephus glides over this inconvenient logic. Why he should want to do so will be examined shortly.

6.7. Ananias’s advice (AJ 20.41-20.42)

Joining Helena in seeking to persuade Izates not to be circumcised, Ananias then advised him that he could ‘worship God (τὸ θεῖον σέβειν) even without being circumcised if indeed he had fully decided to be a devoted adherent of Judaism (πάντως κέκρικε ζηλοῦν τὰ πάτρια

⁶⁶⁹ A point also made by Schwartz (1996) p. 267.

τῶν Ἰουδαίων), for it was this that counted more than circumcision (τοῦτ' εἶναι κυριώτερον τοῦ περιτέμνεσθαι)' (20.41).

Ananias in fact gave an additional reason, saying that, 'furthermore, God Himself would pardon him if, constrained thus by necessity and by fear of his subjects, (μὴ πράξαντι τὸ ἔργον δι' ἀνάγκην καὶ τὸν ἐκ τῶν ὑπηκόων φόβον) he failed to perform this rite' (20.42).

In the first instance, Ananias's belief that being zealous for the ancestral customs of the Jews counted more than circumcision is a difficult statement ostensibly to fit into a logical framework, since circumcision is itself an ancestral custom⁶⁷⁰ and there is a literal impossibility in the advice.⁶⁷¹ Schwartz's argument⁶⁷² that Ananias is suggesting that the mental process of having had the desire (use of the perfect κέκρικε) to perform all the commandments is more valid than the actual performance of circumcision is ingenious, but unconvincing and completely contrary to the rest of the Adiabene narrative which puts the performance of commandments as the key to God's providence and salvation.⁶⁷³

For the most part, scholars have argued that Ananias's response indicates that, at the point of conversation with Ananias, Izates was an adherer rather than a convert.⁶⁷⁴ There is however, in the first instance, a logical problem in any argument that Ananias is attempting to persuade Izates to remain a sympathiser. As noted earlier, if Ananias is arguing that Izates could worship God (but remain a sympathiser, as those who translate the phrase τὸν θεόν/τὸ

⁶⁷⁰ Unless in some way τὰ πάτρια τῶν Ἰουδαίων can be contrasted with νόμοι, in other words circumcision is a νόμος but not one of the πάτρια. Josephus's elastic use of νόμοι, ἔθη, νόμιμα and πάτρια as, at times, interchangeable, would argue against this. See Chapter 5 Appendix 2 for further analysis. In addition, Eleazar (20.43) is extremely strict in relation to τὰ πάτρια, undoubtedly meaning commandments in this instance, and use twice of the same word within this part of the text must indicate the same meaning.

⁶⁷¹ A point noted by Donaldson (2007) p. 336.

⁶⁷² Schwartz (1996) p. 270. So also Marciak (2014) p. 92.

⁶⁷³ 20.48.

⁶⁷⁴ Schiffman (1987) p. 303. So too Nolland (1983) pp. 193-4 and McEleney (1974) p. 325. Collins (1985) p. 179 is not sure whether, at least in Ananias's eyes, Izates would be Jewish without circumcision. Marciak (2014) p. 91 believes that Izates is not Jewish at that point because 'at no place in Ananias's statement is there a single word that Izates will be Jewish'. True, but equally true of all the other conversions identified in Chapter 5 Appendix 2, except the Idumaeans.

θεῖον σέβειν claim it means) without being circumcised, providing he was otherwise pious, presumably, by inference, it would have to be argued that he would have been a non-Jewish sympathiser even if he *had* been circumcised. How then would he differ from a Jew?

Cohen however appears to believe that Metilius, the Roman centurion, captured by the rebels during the siege of Jerusalem (*BJ* 2.454), might have been such a person.⁶⁷⁵ Josephus describes his bargain to remain alive as ‘to Judaize up to the point of circumcision’ (μέχρι περιτομῆς ἰουδαῖσεν) but what exactly *ἰουδαῖσεν* means in these circumstances is difficult to determine. Josephus also uses *ἰουδαῖσεν* in *BJ* 2.463 in respect of people who, from the text, appear to have adopted Jewish customs but were not Jews, thus lending ostensible credence to Cohen’s argument.⁶⁷⁶

However, in the case of Metilius, the circumstances appear to be more analogous to the events narrated in the split narrative of *Vita* 113 and 149, regarding the choice of circumcision or death given to the captured nobles from Trachonitis by Josephus’s forces during the revolt. In turn, both narratives seem similar to the forced conversion narratives of the Idumaeans and Ituraeans that Josephus describes in *Antiquities* Book 13. It would therefore seem more likely that, in the face of some aggressive Jewish triumphalism, Metilius was not a sympathiser but rather one who, under duress, was prepared to save his own life by being circumcised as part of a process of forced transformation (‘conversion’) into the same identity as his Jewish captors.

Ananias’s second reason, that of God’s pardon through necessity and fear, has also convinced some scholars that Izates was an adherer up to this point, and it is argued that the exchange between Izates and Ananias demonstrates that Ananias was in fact encouraging

⁶⁷⁵ Cohen (1999) p. 193 (contra his own earlier position in Cohen (1987) p. 416), albeit he elsewhere in the same article describes the process undergone by Metilius as ‘conversion’ (p.184 n. 35).

⁶⁷⁶ For an examination generally of the word, see Cohen (1999) pp. 175-197.

Izates to remain in a 'semi-proselyte' status', and 'exempted him from full conversion'.⁶⁷⁷

Schiffman's explanation of Ananias's second exculpatory reason is that Ananias's advice of God's pardon is based on what the rabbis later called *ones*, constraint from the performance of a commandment, and that the doctrine of *ones* (or its Second Temple equivalent) excuses him, providing he is truly zealous for all the other commandments.

However, it is difficult to see how exemption from the commandment of circumcision by way of pardon, whether by *ones* or otherwise, applies to sympathisers, as opposed to Jews,⁶⁷⁸ unless one takes the position that all God's commandments are binding on non-Jews. Schwartz⁶⁷⁹ appears to believe just this and proposes that Ananias is saying that in some way there is a commandment for Gentiles to observe *all* God's commandments but that God would pardon Izates if he omitted such practice due to his subjects' objections.

There appears little basis for Schwartz's interpretation of Ananias's position. A detailed examination of possible Second Temple Jewish views on the status of Gentiles in the eyes of the Jewish God and the subsequent history of the development of the Noachide Laws is beyond the scope of this thesis.⁶⁸⁰ Jews' attitudes to Gentiles who wished to become Jews, in modern-day parlance 'convert', seem generally to have been positive, albeit the evidence is relatively scarce.⁶⁸¹ The mere fact that Josephus gives the Adiabene narrative such prominence in the *Antiquities* would seem to indicate that he would have expected other Jews to see this as a 'good thing'.⁶⁸² Other indications of a positive attitude in at least some

⁶⁷⁷ Schiffman (1987) p. 303.

⁶⁷⁸ Collins (1985) pp. 178-9 views Ananias's reassurance of God's pardon as an articulation of an obligation consequent to admission.

⁶⁷⁹ Schwartz (1996) pp. 270-271.

⁶⁸⁰ For discussions on this, see Goodman (1994) pp. 38-59, Cohen (1999) pp. 168-174, Hayes (2002), Donaldson (2007) and Thiessen (2011).

⁶⁸¹ See McKnight (1991) pp. 30-48 for a general discussion on Jewish attitudes to proselytes.

⁶⁸² See also his remark in *C. Ap.* 2.210, where he views genuine converts as meriting a 'gracious welcome' and *C. Ap.* 2.261: 'we gladly welcome any who wish to share our own [customs]', albeit both are statements within an overtly apologetic framework which, inter alia, attempts to rebut misanthropy.

Jewish communities are shown by the fact that the implicit assumption by Tacitus and Juvenal that their readers would have been familiar with such events shows that such events were not uncommon.⁶⁸³

However, it seems unlikely that most Jews in the Second Temple period had a view of *required* behaviour of Gentiles.⁶⁸⁴ *Jubilees* 15.26 contains the statement that ‘those who are not circumcised will be destroyed’ but could well be referring to Hellenised Jews rather than mankind, and in any event seems unlikely to reflect widespread opinion. Hayes examines a number of Second Temple texts which describe Gentile lack of observance of the Jewish God’s laws within the context of Gentile impurity, but none of these texts seem to display an imperative, more an express or implicit exhortation to Jews not to follow the same path and an observation that lack of adherence to God’s law (by anyone) may lead to disappointment at the Day of Judgement.⁶⁸⁵ In these circumstances, it is a significant leap from possibly sectarian disapproval of non-Jews’ behaviour to assume that Josephus is telling his readers that God expects all males, Jew and Gentile alike, to be circumcised.

Schwartz also seems to believe that the use here of τὸ θεῖον rather than τὸν θεὸν indicates that, in a spirit of universalism, Ananias is encouraging Izates to remain an adhering Gentile and worship what he translates as ‘the Deity’, rather than ‘God’, on the basis that ‘the fact that one term is used here and another there [presumably he means τὸν θεὸν at Charax] calls for an explanation’.⁶⁸⁶ In relation to τὸ θεῖον, we have already seen, in examining the activities at Charax, that Josephus elsewhere uses either τὸ θεῖον or τὸν θεὸν

⁶⁸³ See Chapter 4 pp. 100-101 for Gentile attitudes to Jewish conversion. Goodman (1994) p. 64 also sees Philo’s claim that nobility is not dependent on birth (*De Virt.* 187-91) as evidence of Jewish welcome to converts. Philo’s attitude also seems to be displayed in relation to a future world in *Mos.* 2.44: ‘I believe that each nation would abandon its peculiar ways and, throwing overboard their ancestral customs, turn to honouring our laws alone’.

⁶⁸⁴ See Goodman (1984) pp. 53-54 and (1990) pp. 199-200.

⁶⁸⁵ Hayes (2002) pp. 54-57. See also Fuller (2006) pp. 102-196. However Feldman (1993) p. 333 speculates whether, for at least some Jews, there may have been an imperative to convert Gentiles to a Godly life.

⁶⁸⁶ Schwartz (1996) pp. 267-268 and n. 16.

interchangeably with the verb σέβειν to mean either definitively Jewish worship or non-Jewish worship, in other words there is no apparent difference in meaning.

Nolland⁶⁸⁷ agrees with Schiffman, believing Izates to be ‘something less than a proselyte’ and believes that ‘this may be Josephus’s way of underlining what he considers to be the untenability of such a position’. However, if this really were Josephus’s view, to require the (probably Gentile) reader to solve a logic puzzle in order to elicit his meaning would seem to be a strange way of communicating. Additionally, Nolland suggests that the latter of the two excuses, God’s pardon, is based purely on expediency, but that Ananias is attempting to cloak this in theological respectability.⁶⁸⁸ This does not convince. Ananias is presented throughout the first part of the Adiabene narrative as influential and trustworthy. For Ananias to appear to invent bogus theology at this stage of the narrative does not help Josephus’s cause.

In addition, there is a further oddity in the text at this point in the narrative. Ananias tells Izates (20.42) that ‘God Himself would pardon him if, constrained thus by necessity *and* by fear of his subjects, he failed to perform this rite’. The necessity seems to be in addition (καί) to a fear of his subjects, but if so, what was this extra reason? The only extra reason for not doing the deed that Josephus gives is Ananias’s fear of his own punishment by the populace (20.41), but it is difficult to see that as a *necessity*.

There is, however, a more simple explanation of Ananias’s words. If faced with the choice of Izates as a Jew striving after the other πάτρια and not being circumcised, or the converse, namely circumcision but no zealousness in keeping the other laws, Ananias would chose the former of the two propositions. At this stage, for Ananias to be saying that Izates can

⁶⁸⁷ Nolland (1983) pp. 193-4.

⁶⁸⁸ Ibid. A view also expressed by Chesnutt (1995) p. 164.

remain an adherer while his mother is truly accepted as a Jew makes little sense. The most obvious explanation is that Izates will continue to be a Jew, notwithstanding his lack of circumcision, if he is wholly (the word *πάντως* is important) committed.⁶⁸⁹

6.8. Eleazar's contribution (AJ 20.43-20.46)

Consequently, we are then introduced to another Jew, Eleazar who came from Galilee and who was 'extremely strict when it came to the ancestral laws (*πάνυ περὶ τὰ πάτρια δοκῶν ἀκριβῆς*)' (20.43). He said that Izates should not only read the law but even more do what was commanded by it. Eleazar asked Izates how long he would remain uncircumcised and encouraged him, if he had not read the law on circumcision, to do so, so that he might know what an impiety he was committing. Izates was thus persuaded and had the deed done forthwith.

That Josephus describes Eleazar in these terms is no accidental choice of phrase. Eleazar was extremely 'strict', rather than merely 'right', because the issue was not black or white, and Eleazar was at one end of a spectrum of belief. Josephus uses the adjective *ἀκριβῆς* to describe the Pharisees,⁶⁹⁰ but there is no evidence that they themselves would have described those Jews who did not adhere to their own codes as non-Jews, merely not appropriately observant Jews.

Eleazar accuses Izates of being 'guilty of the greatest offence against the law, and thereby against God' (20.44) and subsequently of committing an impiety (*ἀσέβεια*) (20.45) in not being circumcised. It is difficult to see how Izates can, at this stage, be anything other than

⁶⁸⁹ A position taken by Gilbert (1991) pp. 309-310. See also Borgen (1996) p. 53 and Simon (1986) p. 484 n. 32.

⁶⁹⁰ See *BJ* 1.110, *BJ* 2.162, *Vita* 191 and also 13.297 and 18.15 for their reputation for observance. We see an echo of this zealotry in Josephus's own life when he was sent to demolish Herod the Tetrarch's house which had forbidden images of living animals on its walls (*Vita* 65).

Jewish as accusations of impiety would most obviously be levelled at co-religionists, unless one accepts the argument, discussed and rejected above, that Gentiles can be impious.⁶⁹¹

Eleazar also plaintively enquires of Izates ‘How long will you continue to be uncircumcised?’ (μέχρι τίνος ἀπερίτμητος μένεις) (20.45), an odd question to pose of someone not Jewish, but a very obvious question of one who was.

Cohen⁶⁹² believes that even if Ananias’s statements could be taken to mean that it was possible to become a Jew without circumcision, Izates had failed the test because Eleazar’s reproach, on finding Izates reading the Law of Moses, is that Izates is required not ‘merely to read the law but also, and even more, do what is commanded in it’ (20.44). Cohen appears to believe that this is meant to imply that Izates venerated the God of Israel without following the Jewish customs at all. This seems to misunderstand the nature of the reproach. We know that Izates was already carrying out at least some of the practices from the narrative at Charax. The statement that Izates was reading the Laws when discovered by Eleazar was inserted by Josephus to set up a narrative whereby Eleazar can point to the fact that, even though Izates has been reading the Laws (and therefore should know about the importance of circumcision), he has not carried out the most important commandment of all.

Schwartz’s⁶⁹³ interpretation of Eleazar’s position is somewhat different. Continuing the argument that Jews believed that Gentiles were also required to obey God’s commandments, Schwartz states that ‘he [Eleazar] considered those, even Gentiles, who failed to [obey] God’s law, to be sinners against Him’, a position also taken by Feldman⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹¹ A view also taken by Gilbert (1991) p. 308.

⁶⁹² Cohen (1987) p. 420 n. 34.

⁶⁹³ Schwartz (1996) p. 271.

⁶⁹⁴ Feldman (1993 p. 333.

and Marciak.⁶⁹⁵ Donaldson agrees and states ‘Eleazar’s position was clear: the only possible form of piety for a Gentile, the only way to please God, was through adherence to all the commandments, including circumcision’.⁶⁹⁶ According to Schwartz, therefore, the difference between Eleazar and Ananias is that the latter believed God will excuse Gentiles who wish to adhere without circumcision, but Eleazar did not.

This view surely presents a conundrum. As noted earlier in this analysis, if a Gentile does obey all the commandments, including circumcision, how then does he differ from a Jew? Neither Schwartz nor Marciak address this. Donaldson recognises this and comes to the conclusion that ‘Eleazar’s position, then, was that the only religious option for Gentiles was incorporation into the Jewish people’.⁶⁹⁷ The problem with this approach is that it relies on both a universalistic approach to Judaism, otherwise completely absent from the text and, as argued earlier, unsupported by other evidence, and relies on a view that Josephus uses ἀσέβεια, impiety, in this way.⁶⁹⁸ This is not supported from Josephus’s use of the word elsewhere in the *Antiquities*, where the noun is used twenty two times, and on all but two occasions the impiety is by Jews, mostly individuals but occasionally collectively.⁶⁹⁹ The first exception is 10.256, where Daniel prays to God in spite of a royal edict forbidding prayer for 30 days, observed by others (presumably non-Jews) not because of their impiety (δι’ ἀσέβειαν) but because [text corrupt]. The second exception is 19.302, which describes the erection of a statue of Claudius in the synagogue of Dora by the Gentile inhabitants as

⁶⁹⁵ Marciak (2014) p. 90.

⁶⁹⁶ Donaldson (2007) pp. 335-6, 480.

⁶⁹⁷ Ibid p. 336.

⁶⁹⁸ And indeed neither Schwartz nor Donaldson seem to be asserting that there was a *commandment* on Gentiles to circumcise (Izates’s problem as Eleazar saw it), merely that gaining God’s favour could not be achieved through short measures. For a discussion on the absence of universalism in the Adiabene narrative, see Chapter 5 pp. 147-8.

⁶⁹⁹ 1.233, 7.198, 8.279, 8.287, 8.289, 8.309, 9.27, 9.96, 9.109, 9.266, 10.104, 10.256, 11.143, 16.90, 16.100, 16.110, 16.188, 16.211, 16.402, 17.1, 19.302, 20.166.

an ἀσέβεια, a rather individual circumstance, and is probably better translated as ‘sacrilege’ rather than ‘impiety’.

In summary, therefore, both Ananias and Eleazar believed Izates to be Jewish, irrespective of whether he became circumcised. The difference between Ananias and Eleazar is that Ananias believed that, in the particular circumstances, this apparent transgression would be excused by God. Conversely, Eleazar believed the excuse not to be valid and therefore Izates, as a Jew, would be committing a transgression that would *not* be excused by God.

6.9. Monobazus’s experience (AJ 20.75)

Somewhat later, at least in Josephus’s narrative, we are introduced to Monobazus, Izates’s elder brother. Izates’s brother Monobazus noticed Izates’s pious worship (τὴν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν εὐσέβειαν) (20.75) and decided ‘to adopt the practices of the Jews (ἔθεσι χρῆσθαι τοῖς Ἰουδαίων)’.⁷⁰⁰ The process here is dealt with somewhat summarily, one suspects because Monobazus’s conversion is not important to Josephus, other than as a catalyst for the nobles’ revolt against the Jewish royal family and the subsequent involvement of Parthia. It can be seen that the verb χρᾶσθαι was used by Josephus in 13.257 (τοῖς Ἰουδαίων νόμοις χρῆσθαι θέλοιεν) to describe the Idumaeans’ so-called conversion and therefore, notwithstanding the absence of any explicit reference to circumcision, it seems likely that Monobazus was henceforth considered a Jew. To argue otherwise would mean that, even after Izates and Helena have become Jews, Monobazus still stops short, an illogical interpretation within the framework of Josephus’s story.

⁷⁰⁰ As noted in Chapter 2 p. 29, Monobazus’s conversion is not mentioned at the beginning of the narrative (20.17), perhaps so as not to take the spotlight off Izates.

6.10. Summary and conclusions

It is clear that Josephus is telling his readers something about becoming a Jew in the Second Temple period. The problem is determining exactly what he is saying, in particular about the role of circumcision. There is no easy explanation, and the multiplicity of different analyses of the narrative by scholars attests to this. Apparent contradictions present themselves at every stage of the narrative. How can Helena, Izates and the women of Charax ὁμοίως attain the same state? What does it mean when Izates wants εἰς ἐκεῖνα (ἐθῆ) μεταθέσθαι once back in Adiabene? How can a man be zealous for the ancestral customs of the Jews and not be circumcised? In what way does full devotion to the other customs count more than circumcision? What precisely are Izates's subjects' concerns? The issue of potentially different sources has been examined in Chapter 2 but, although not free from doubt, it seems highly likely that, whatever the sources, Josephus owned the language that has emerged.

The main conclusions to be drawn from the analysis in this chapter are as follows. Firstly, Josephus is not saying that Izates became a Godfearer or adherer in Charax. For Josephus, it can be conclusively shown that τὸν θεὸν/τὸ θεῖον σέβειν definitively does not mean this and usually means 'worship as a Jew' (and undoubtedly means so elsewhere in the narrative). Secondly, it is reasonable to believe that Helena became a Jew because Josephus tells us so, by equating her status with that of Izates in the opening paragraph of the narrative (20.17). Izates's status as a Jew is then reinforced by equating a description of Helena's conversion to Izates's experience in Charax by use of the word ὁμοίως. Thirdly, the conclusion that Izates's status as a Jew before circumcision is not disturbed by the use of μεταθέσθαι in 20.38, which should not be translated as 'convert', an otherwise unique use within the catalogue of conversion language used by Josephus, but should be read as 'changed his mind' (about circumcision), and βεβαίως should be translated as 'securely'.

Lastly, the difference between Ananias and Eleazar was not in relation to the acceptability or otherwise of Izates's status as an uncircumcised adherer but solely in terms of whether, as a Jew, Izates would be pardoned by God for his breach of the Law in failing to be circumcised.

It seems therefore from a close textual analysis that Izates was at no point a Godfearer or adherer and that Josephus thought it was possible to consider oneself (and to be considered by others) to have become a Jew without circumcision, provided one kept to the other Laws, although one could be in danger of being thought of as a not very observant Jew (and therefore potentially not a worthy person in the eyes of God and indeed some other Jews), hence Izates's ultimate desire for circumcision. However, it is clear from the evidence elsewhere in Josephus that for Josephus this was a very special case, and indeed, Goodman has raised the interesting question as to by whose 'authority', if indeed anybody's, the royal couple were considered Jewish.⁷⁰¹ That Josephus considers that circumcision for men was the overwhelming norm for those wishing to become an Ἰουδαῖος is incontrovertible. As discussed in Chapter 3 (pp. 62-4), Josephus himself tells us of its fundamental importance as a commandment, originally to Abraham (1.192, 214) and Josephus's view of its centrality to observance is evidenced by his unfulfilled plans to write about it (1.192, 1.214). It is also reasonably clear from other first century CE sources that circumcision was the norm for would-be male converts.⁷⁰² However, there is room for doubt that this was the universal practice⁷⁰³ and, bearing in mind the special position of royalty generally within

⁷⁰¹ Goodman (1990) p.194, (2007a) p. 171.

⁷⁰² Schürer (1973-1986) vol. III p. 173 sees the fact that circumcision, along with instruction and immersion, is so much taken for granted as a fundamental requirement for male converts in Rabbinic Judaism (principally Bavli Yevamot 47a-b and Gerim 1:1) that 'even in the absence of definite proof they can be considered as prevailing in the Second Temple period'. See McEleney (1974), Nolland (1981), Schiffman (1985) pp. 19-39, Collins (1985), Borgen (1987), Barclay (1998), Cohen (1999) pp. 198-238, Feldman (2003) p. 143 and Donaldson (2007) pp. 483-492 on evidence from the Second Temple period.

⁷⁰³ McEleney (1974) pp. 332-3, Cohen (1999) p. 218.

the ancient world,⁷⁰⁴ if ever there was to be a special credible case, Izates could have been such a person.

We should, however, stand back a little at this point. There is a danger in examining the text as though it were a manual for conversion, similar to Talmudic prescription. If we do that, we may not be able to see the wood for the trees. It seems safe to say that, notwithstanding Josephus's articulated desire to write a manual of Judaism (1.25, 4.198, 20.268; never accomplished, so far as we know) wherein he would expound *inter alia* on circumcision, this is not it. In addition, monotheism and abandonment of former gods, a cornerstone of the Jewish God's commandments,⁷⁰⁵ is entirely absent from the early part of the narrative.⁷⁰⁶

There is, therefore, after all this analysis, a suspicion that for Josephus, the issue of how and when Izates became a Jew, and the role of circumcision in the narrative, was not so much of importance within a theological framework, as a means to supporting his wider authorial objectives. In reality, the circumcision narrative is a dramatic artifice. Izates could have come back from Charax already circumcised, or the deed could have been done in Adiabene without any fuss. Josephus could even have omitted any mention of circumcision at all. The counterpoint between Ananias and Eleazar is not so much a precursor of the kind of theological disputes recorded in the Talmud as a means of focusing the reader's attention on Izates's personal qualities. I suggest that the real purpose of the lengthy 'conversion' story was that it allowed Josephus to display an important and heroic person's passion for Judaism, which had him take the more difficult and dangerous path of circumcision under

⁷⁰⁴ See Chapter 7 for further analysis of the status of royalty.

⁷⁰⁵ A point emphasised by Josephus in 3.91, *C. Ap.* 2.190-193.

⁷⁰⁶ It is, however, present in Josephus's didactic close to the conversion aspect of the narrative (20.48) and is repeated more overtly in 20.90. See Chapter 5 pp. 147-8 for an examination of the particularistic elements of the narrative. Nonetheless, its importance in the conversion narrative itself seems negligible.

Eleazar's instruction, thus further exhibiting his piety, the central message of the story,⁷⁰⁷ and therefore the more worthy of God's pronoia. How Josephus's readers might have viewed the conversion and particularly the circumcision narrative is examined in Chapter 7.

⁷⁰⁷ See Chapter 5 pp. 127-132.

Chapter 7

The Adiabene narrative in Domitianic Rome

7.1. Introduction

In Chapter 4. *The historiographical and historical context to the Adiabene narrative*, it has been proposed that, irrespective of Josephus's ostensible and possible intended audience or audiences, the genre in which the *Antiquities* was written was clearly one which followed a Greco-Roman tradition. This chapter examines how a reader familiar with the Greco-Roman tradition might have reacted to reading the Adiabene narrative. In particular, it examines eleven key aspects of the narrative: the location of the narrative; royal easterners as narrative heroes; Izates's display of Cardinal Virtues; whether Jews were associated with Parthians by Greeks and Romans such that the hero might be 'doubly' tainted; a Greco-Roman view of Helena's euergetism; the role of dreams in Greco-Roman historiography; Josephus's structuring of the role of God and Fate; reversals of Fortune in Greco-Roman historiography; whether a supposed Roman aversion to Jewish conversion would have influenced the reader; the effect of making circumcision a key feature of the narrative; and lastly the effect on the reader of a hero born from an incestuous marriage.

7.2. Location

The Adiabene narrative begins abruptly. After the introductory passage in Book 20 concerning affairs in the province of Syria and disputes between the Roman procurator Fadus and the Judaeian aristocracy, the reader is suddenly, in 20.17, jerked away from that part of the world with the statement that 'Helena, queen of Adiabene, and her son Izates, became converts to Judaism under the following circumstances.' It is interesting that Josephus makes no effort to

explain Adiabene's location or, other than a brief description of the province of Carron (20.25), its characteristics. This can be compared with his introduction to the story of Asinaeus and Anilaeus, also located beyond the eastern edge of the Roman Empire, where Josephus gives the reader a significant survey of the area, before commencing his tale of the two brothers.⁷⁰⁸ It is unlikely that his reader would have known very much, if anything, about Adiabene. From surviving texts, it would appear that those first century CE readers who had read Strabo or Pliny would have known that it was close to Armenia and was once part of Assyria, but not much else.⁷⁰⁹ If they had lived in Rome, they might have chanced upon Adiabenian hostages or captives, but whether they would have been able to distinguish them from other easterners is open to doubt.⁷¹⁰

The effect of this opening sentence therefore would have been to grab the attention of the reader, both because of the apparently exotic location but also the paucity of detail. In particular, it is clear that, over the first century CE, the Greco-Roman reader would have been increasingly interested in geography (γεωγραφία), as a branch of philosophy, following the expansion of the Roman Empire under Augustus.⁷¹¹ Such interest found expression not only in the geographical works of Strabo, Pomponius Mela and Pliny, but also in works of prose and poetry by such authors as Catullus, Horace, and Virgil, who used the medium of description of far-away lands not only to glorify Augustus's conquests, but also to excite natural curiosity.⁷¹² It is probable that Josephus too was trying to tap into this curiosity when he claimed to have written about the history of the Jews not only in Palestine, but also in Syria, Egypt, Assyria and Babylonia.⁷¹³

⁷⁰⁸ 18.310-313.

⁷⁰⁹ Strabo *Geography* 11.4.8, 16.1.1, 3-4, 8, 18-19; Plin. *HN* 5.13, 6.16.

⁷¹⁰ For Adiabenians in Rome, see Chapter 2 p. 24.

⁷¹¹ Dueck (2012) p. 3 and Roller (2015) pp. 169-170.

⁷¹² See Dueck (2000) p. 16.

⁷¹³ 20.259-60.

In addition, an interest in ethnography, particularly that of the Orient, had been shown first by the Greeks (following the Persian Wars) and then by the Romans for some considerable period of time. Jews too seemed to attract interest. Stern presents extracts from 81 Greek authors prior to, or contemporary with, Josephus, who mention Jews, and his three volumes presumably only represent a fraction of the literature available in first century CE Rome.⁷¹⁴ In particular, Josephus (*C. Ap.* 1.183) believed that Hecataeus of Abdera (4-3 c. BCE) had written an entire book about the Jews, and Josephus (1.240), Clement and Eusebius all quote from Alexander Polyhistor's first century BCE book on the Jews.⁷¹⁵

7.3. The heroes as royal easterners and Jews

From Josephus's introduction, it seems that readers are left with a small puzzle: what to make of the ethnicity of the principal protagonists of the tale. The less educated would have had no idea until Izates's meeting with Artabanus (20.54) that they were part of the ethnic mix of the Parthian empire, the better educated would have known them to be descendants of Assyrians, but whether many of those would have seen the Adiabenean royal family as anything other than Parthian-like easterners from beyond the Euphrates is open to doubt. In addition, the fact that these ethnic easterners appeared to have changed their ethnicity and become Jews would have been noteworthy. The more assiduous of Josephus's readers may have remembered from earlier books of the *Antiquities* that the Idumaeans also apparently became Jews,⁷¹⁶ but that may have sat oddly with a Roman view that allowed that people could become Roman citizens, adopt Roman customs, but yet retained their own ethnic identity.⁷¹⁷

⁷¹⁴ Stern (1974-1984).

⁷¹⁵ See Sterling (1992) pp. 141-52.

⁷¹⁶ 13.257, 15.254.

⁷¹⁷ See for example Claudius's speech on admission of Gauls to the Senate (*Tac. Ann.* 11.24) and Woolf (1998) p. 240: 'Those Roman aristocrats who had taken upon themselves the burden of regulating civilisation had defined Roman culture in such a way that it might function as a marker of status, not of political or ethnic identity'.

The Roman view of Parthia and Parthians has been examined at length in Chapter 4 and most Greco-Roman readers would in all probability have viewed Adiabeniensians, at least initially, with disdain, a prejudice inherited from fourth century Greek writers, for their un-western appearance and habits, together with a sneaking respect for their martial prowess. It is noticeable that there is one characteristic associated by a Greco-Roman readership with nobility that is entirely absent from the description of Izates, namely that of physical attractiveness. This is unlikely to be accidental, and would seem to be part of a carefully crafted narrative, as discussed in Chapter 5, in which Josephus does his utmost to establish Izates's heroic credibility in an environment where the Greco-Roman world viewed the Parthian man as, at least in physical appearance, distinctly unmanly, even if his fighting qualities could not be denied. As described by Valerius Flaccus, a contemporary of Josephus, the stock image of a Parthian was that 'he wears bangles on his arms, a scimitar at his right side, and long treads run down to cover his barbarian feet ... which his mother had tended with the perfume of Sabaean flowers and decked with purest gold'.⁷¹⁸

Josephus subtly attempts to help himself overcome these prejudices in his description of Izates and indeed other easterners in the Adiabene narrative. Elsewhere in the *Antiquities* almost all extended references to Parthians contain a reference to barbarians (βάρβαροι) in the passage.⁷¹⁹ Although the word is not necessarily used derogatively by Josephus, who in fact at one point equates Jews with barbarians,⁷²⁰ it is still noticeable that the Adiabene narrative is the only extended Parthian narrative where there are no references to any of the protagonists as barbarians. This therefore seems to be yet another example, as seen in Chapter 5 regarding Josephus's treatment of Parthian history, where he has had to deliberately mould his narrative

⁷¹⁸ *Argonautica* 6.690 ff., trans. Mozley LCL 286.

⁷¹⁹ Parthian invasion of Jerusalem (14.341, 343, 347); Herod's support of Antony at Samosata (14.440, 14.441, 14.442, 14.445); Artabanus against Vonones (18.47, 49); Asinaeus and Anilaus (18.328).

⁷²⁰ 'Writings ... only found among us and some other barbarian peoples' (14.187). Otherwise, for the most part, he uses the word, when coupled with 'Greeks' to mean 'the whole world'.

to reinforce his proposition that even Parthians can be civilised, exhibit Greco-Roman virtues and can be truly admirable exemplars.⁷²¹

Greco-Roman attitudes to Jews generally have also been discussed earlier in Chapter 4. That Jews generally were not held in high regard seems an obvious conclusion, whether because of Flavian imperial propaganda specifically drawing on the ultimately successful campaign in Judaea, or because Jews were lumped together with other Orientals as inferior, or because of the Jews' specific peculiarities of custom and in particular their perceived odd insistence on rejecting religious syncretism, or indeed a mixture of all of these views.

The question then becomes: would it have made any difference that the heroes of the narrative were royalty? It would appear that Rome and Romans treated foreign royalty with a respect that perhaps sits oddly with their more broad feelings of racial superiority. Junior foreign royal family members were sent to Rome, particularly following Augustus's accession to power. In particular, and perhaps most relevant to this question, Jewish royalty were familiar in Rome and the imperial court. According to Josephus, Herod sent eight of his sons to grow up in Rome.⁷²² In addition, Agrippa I, grandson of Herod, was brought up at Tiberius's court and was a particular friend of the Emperor's son Drusus and the future emperor Gaius Caligula, and his mother Berenice was a confidant of Antonia, mother of Germanicus and the future emperor Claudius and grandmother of Gaius Caligula.⁷²³ Later, Agrippa's son Agrippa II was

⁷²¹ Josephus also appears to attempt to circumvent some of what appear to have been Greco-Roman prejudices against both Jews and Parthians, discussed more fully in Chapter 4, for example by showing both Izates and Artabanus displaying loyalty to one another, in an environment where, as we have seen, it appears to be the case that a Greco-Roman reader would have assumed quite the opposite characteristic.

⁷²² *AJ* 15.342-3, *BJ* 1.435, 445 (Alexander & Aristobulus and unnamed), *AJ* 17.52-3, *BJ* 1.573 (Antipater), *AJ* 17.80, *BJ* 1.602-3 (Archelaus and Philip), *AJ* 17.20-21 (Antipas and Herod).

⁷²³ *AJ* 18.143. 18.165-7.

brought up at the court of Claudius.⁷²⁴ Such royal offspring would have been accompanied by a retinue and generously funded, thereby enabling them to mix in the wealthiest circles.⁷²⁵

The royal Jewish pair of Agrippa II and his sister Berenice were also present in Rome from 75 CE and well known there. Berenice was the paramour of Titus, the relationship probably starting in Judaea in the late 60s.⁷²⁶ Although she was unpopular, and ultimately dismissed by Titus, Dio asserts that she expected to marry him,⁷²⁷ and Quintilian mentions that he pleaded a case before her, which although somewhat vague, at least indicates some kind of status.⁷²⁸ Her unpopularity may also have reflected as much the Roman inbred distaste for Cleopatra's seduction of Antony and her status as enemy of the state, as her Jewish/foreign identity.⁷²⁹ Agrippa's status in Rome is less remarked upon. Dio tells us that he was made a praetor by Vespasian⁷³⁰ and Josephus clearly saw him as a supporter who would impress the Greco-Roman world generally. He praises Agrippa and his family as thoroughly conversant with Hellenic culture⁷³¹ and he assumes his reader will be impressed by Agrippa's approval of the *Jewish War*.⁷³²

Royals also came under compulsion, sent to Rome by the foreign monarch as *ὄμηροι* or *obsides*, often translated as 'hostages' but without an exact modern equivalent concept. In some cases, they were indeed pledges of good behaviour, such as those sent by Monobazus and others after

⁷²⁴ *AJ* 19.360, 20.10-12.

⁷²⁵ See *BJ* 1.573 in the case of Herod's son Alexander.

⁷²⁶ *Tac. Hist.* 2.2, 2.81.

⁷²⁷ *Cass. Dio* 65.15.3-4, 66.8.1. Suetonius (*Tit.* 7.1) writes that Titus had allegedly promised marriage.

⁷²⁸ *Instit.* 4.1.19.

⁷²⁹ Herodian relates how at the end of the second century CE the emperor Caracalla made an offer to marry the daughter of Artabanus IV, King of Parthia, so that the two empires could be combined. We do not know what Romans in general would have made of this; the offer was in fact a ruse which allowed the Romans to enter the country with an armed force without opposition, whereupon they then massacred the Parthians (*Herodian* 4.10.1-4.11.9).

⁷³⁰ *Cass. Dio* 65.15.4.

⁷³¹ *Vita* 359.

⁷³² *Vita* 364-6.

the peace treaty with Corbulo in 63 CE.⁷³³ However, they were also sent more voluntarily, such as appears to be the case in respect of Izates's kinsmen to Rome and Parthia upon his accession, as a sign of friendly intentions (as well as the convenient removal of potential rivals), as were the Parthian Phraates's four sons, received by Augustus in c. 10 CE, so he says, 'not because he had been overcome in war, but because he sought our friendship (*amicitia*) by pledging (*per pignora*) his children'.⁷³⁴ These foreigners were important to Emperors. Augustus led Phraates's children into the arena and sat them two rows behind him,⁷³⁵ and the fact that Augustus makes a point of saying that the 'hostages' were sent to him personally must indicate that these people were of some standing. The investiture in Rome of the Parthian Tiridates as King of Armenia by Nero in 66 CE, accompanied by Parthian hostages, was, according to Cassius Dio, an event of great glory and a massive public spectacle, notwithstanding, as Tacitus points out, the homage to Nero followed no Parthian reverse.⁷³⁶

As Braund puts it 'The presence of the *obsides* evidently rebounded to the credit of the emperor, but that need not imply the subjection of the *obses*'.⁷³⁷ Polybius tells that the escape of Demetrius I, Syrian pretender, from Rome took four days to come to the Senate's notice, hardly evidence of a restricted lifestyle.⁷³⁸ Izates's transmission of his dangerous brothers to both Claudius in Rome and Artabanus in Parthia is evidence of Izates's desire to create an

⁷³³ Cass. Dio 62.23.4, 63.1.2. Although, in Monobazus's case, that did not deter the Adiabenean royal family and kinsmen siding with the besieged Jerusalemites later that decade (*BJ* 2.520, 5.474, 6.356-7).

⁷³⁴ RG 32.2, trans. Brunt & Moore (1967). Josephus and Tacitus (*AJ* 18.41-2, *Ann.* 2.1) see this as a convenient removal of rivals, as does Strabo, who tells us that, unlike Herod's son Alexander, these 'hostages' were lavishly funded by the Roman state (*Strabo Geog.* 6.4.2, 16.1.28). Josephus states (18.102-3) that Artabanus III gave his son Darius as hostage to Tiberius in c. 37 CE (see also Suet. *Vit.* 2.4, *Calig.* 19 and Cass. Dio 59.17.5). Under somewhat more duress, Vologeses later (54 CE) handed over Parthian royalty as *obsides*, threatened with war by Corbulo (*Tac. Ann.* 13.9) and Tiridates, King of Armenia and brother of Vologeses, gave his daughter to Nero in 63 CE as a hostage (*Tac. Ann.* 15.30). It is these hostages who are probably referred to in Agrippa's speech to the Jerusalemites in the *Jewish War* as people who 'may be seen in Italy, under the pretext of peace, bending to the yoke' (*BJ* 2.379, trans. Thackeray LCL 203). Braund (1984) pp. 9-17 sees the process generally more as creation of alliances than as guarantees of fidelity.

⁷³⁵ Suet. *Aug.* 43.4.

⁷³⁶ Cass. Dio 62/63.1-7, *Tac. Ann.* 15.29. Nonetheless, Tiridates took the opportunity to recognise Nero's sovereignty (Cass. Dio 62.5.2).

⁷³⁷ Braund (1984) p. 15.

⁷³⁸ Polyb. 31.11-15.

impression of amity to Rome and thus an insurance policy should Rome again attempt to cross the Euphrates, rather than recognition of subjection to Rome. Allen refers to ‘a complex hybrid quality of the hostage’, indicating that so-called hostages were difficult to categorise and often had a kind of split identity whereby they could be, for example, both a guarantee of fidelity and an honoured guest.⁷³⁹ As Sidebottom comments, ‘it would be a mistake to look for a rigid hierarchy in Rome’s treatment of foreign powers’ and that how Rome treated foreign states and their rulers was essentially based on pragmatism.⁷⁴⁰ However, he acknowledges that ‘some Romans at some times could accept that their great eastern neighbour (Parthia, then Sassanid Persia) was the equal of the Roman empire and that Parthia was a special case’.

There are other indications that kings were treated differently. Cassius Dio relates how Mark Antony, in his war against the Parthians in 36 BCE, kept Artaxes, King of Armenia, in silver chains because it was unseemly that a man who had been king should be bound in fetters of iron.⁷⁴¹ Similarly Josephus quotes Strabo who remarks that Antony, in beheading the Hasmonaean Antigonus, ‘was the first Roman who decided to behead a king’.⁷⁴² Clearly the measure was seen as drastic, in an environment where beheading otherwise of captives was commonplace. Antiochus IV Epiphanes declared to the Senate on his accession that, during his previous stay in Rome, he had been treated as a monarch and not as a hostage (‘ut pro rege, non pro obside’).⁷⁴³ As Isaac puts it, ‘There was a long tradition of, and admiration for, and special treatment of, enemy leaders. Enemy leaders may be admired and given preferential treatment while their subjects are despised and enslaved or worse’.⁷⁴⁴

⁷³⁹ Allen (2006) p. 29.

⁷⁴⁰ Sidebottom (2007) p. 22.

⁷⁴¹ Cass. Dio 49.39.6.

⁷⁴² *AJ* 15.9.

⁷⁴³ Livy 42.6.9.

⁷⁴⁴ Isaac (2004) pp. 39-40.

However, there are numerous examples of offensive behaviour by Romans to foreign royalty that would suggest more than just the rudeness of individuals. Cicero, in a letter to his brother Quintus, recounts his speech in the Senate when Antiochus I, King of Commagene, petitioned for renewal of honours, and Cicero describes the laughter he raised by making fun of the fact that the King's purple bordered gown, awarded during Caesar's consulship, had in fact been awarded to a country bumpkin.⁷⁴⁵ As Balsdon puts it, 'the higher a Roman's rank, the worse he suffered from the disease the Greeks called ὑπερηφανία, bossiness, arrogance, the sense of innate superiority'.⁷⁴⁶ However, it is noticeable that most if not all examples are from the time of the Republic. Following the expansion of the Empire under Augustus and its administrative reorganisation,⁷⁴⁷ it may well be the case that the role played by foreign royalty in holding together the Empire as vassal kings produced a subtle difference in the viewpoint of Romans generally. Braund gives several examples of so-called client kings' influence and prestige, notably Agrippa I's long running dispute with Marsus, Governor of Syria, which ultimately lead to Claudius replacing Marsus with Cassius Longinus, and Marcus Agrippa embracing Herod as an equal, concluding that 'there was a certain parallelism between king and leading Roman figure in the Mediterranean world'.⁷⁴⁸

What, therefore, can we conclude? Probably, that the Greco-Roman reader may have had mixed feelings about Izates, torn between on the one hand innate prejudice against barbarians and an innate distrust of Jews furthered by late first century CE politics, and on the other a grudging respect for Parthian martial qualities, and a view that even barbarian kings had an elevated status, particularly those whose birth was attended by miraculous portents and who

⁷⁴⁵ Cicero *QFr.* 15.3 (II.11). The reference is to the *toga praetexta*, often given as an honour to non-Romans.

⁷⁴⁶ Balsdon (1979) p. 170. See also Livy 45.2, Polyb. 29.27 and Suet. *Iul.* 71, where Caesar grabs Juba, the heir to the throne of Numidia, by the beard. Balsdon gives other examples: pp. 26, 265 n. 24, 170-171 and 286 nn. 56 and 57.

⁷⁴⁷ For which see generally Jones (1970) pp. 94-109.

⁷⁴⁸ Braund (1984) p. 81. See *AJ* 16.61, 19.340, 363, 20.1.

displayed civilised characteristics.⁷⁴⁹ It is this last point, not apparent in the opening paragraph, that Josephus is at pains to elaborate upon as the narrative progresses and the reader learns more about Izates's display of the qualities of ἀρετή.

7.4. Izates's Cardinal Virtues

Josephus's portrait of Izates as an exemplar of the cardinal virtues of σοφία, σωφροσύνη, ἀνδρεία, δικαιοσύνη and εὐσέβεια (ὁσιότης), all as aspects of ἀρετή, has been examined in Chapter 5 from the point of view of Izates's conformity with other Jewish, particularly biblical, heroes. It is also noticeable that post-biblically, Jewish heroes are somewhat few and far between in the *Antiquities*. Joseph the Tobiad and his son Hyrcanus qualify, albeit as flawed personalities, Judas Maccabaeus and his Hasmonaean brothers undoubtedly do but Herod clearly does not. Thus it could be argued that Josephus needed another Jewish hero, particularly a relatively recent one, to make sure that his audience understood that Jews could be heroes in the present day as well as the distant past.

Presumably, the message behind the portrayal of a character that exhibited these particular noble qualities would not have been lost on a Greco-Roman audience, and the link between Izates's ἀρετή and his subsequent εὐδαιμονία will have struck a chord. For the Greco-Roman world, ἀρετή, virtue, was critical in determining both the worth of individuals and of their societies. Of what exactly ἀρετή consisted, there was some difference of view. Plato (*Protagoras* 349b-c) defines this in terms of five cardinal virtues: wisdom (σοφία), temperance (σωφροσύνη), courage (ἀνδρεία), justice (δικαιοσύνη) and holiness (ὁσιότης). However, by the time of the early Principate, these had mutated to four, omitting ὁσιότης, and had become a

⁷⁴⁹ The medium of dreams portending greatness was well established in the Ancient World. See below pp. 207-210 for further analysis of dreams in Greco-Roman historiography.

tenet of Stoic philosophy.⁷⁵⁰ Although ἀρετή can be seen to have been a particular preoccupation of the Stoic school of philosophy,⁷⁵¹ it would also seem to have been widely believed to have been of considerable importance generally in Roman society.⁷⁵²

Similarly, the concept of εὐδαιμονία would have resonated with Josephus's Greco-Roman readers. As Runia notes, εὐδαιμονία equated to a fulfilled life, comprising a number of characteristic or virtues.⁷⁵³ Since the time of Plato, there had been a belief that 'the good man will act well and nobly in whatever he does, and he who acts well will be blessed and happy, and he who is wicked and acts badly will be miserable'.⁷⁵⁴ Aristotle described it as the end of human nature and proposed that a happy life is synonymous with being virtuous,⁷⁵⁵ and Epictetus wrote that virtue promises good fortune and tranquillity and happiness.⁷⁵⁶

There is a further Stoic link. Cicero asserted that the Stoics equated happiness with virtue, rather than possessions.⁷⁵⁷ In addition, as Long describes it, 'the Stoic sage is free from all passion. Anger, anxiety, cupidity, dread, elation, these and similar extreme emotions are all absent from his disposition'.⁷⁵⁸ It is therefore probably not a coincidence that the hero of the narrative, Izates, similarly displays no emotion, even when under the most severe stress. Additionally, McDonnell argues that physical prowess or courage (ἀνδρεία), especially as displayed in war, was for the Romans the key aspect of ἀρετή or *virtus*.⁷⁵⁹ If this is correct, then Izates fulfils this aspect of virtue very well.

⁷⁵⁰ For an examination of different definitions, see Wallace Hadrill (1981) pp. 300-7.

⁷⁵¹ Long (1974) pp. 107-209, Attridge (1984) p. 224.

⁷⁵² Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.37 (81), Plin. *HN* 7.40.

⁷⁵³ Runia (2002) pp. 135-7.

⁷⁵⁴ Pl. *Grg.* 507b8-c5.

⁷⁵⁵ Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 10.6.1.

⁷⁵⁶ *Dissertations* 1.4.4. See Mason (1996) p. 199, (1991) p. 185.

⁷⁵⁷ Cic. *Fin.* 3.43-44.

⁷⁵⁸ Long (1974) p. 206.

⁷⁵⁹ McDonnell (2003) pp. 235-8.

However, it might be thought from Cassius Dio and others that dabbling in Stoic philosophy could be seen as a dangerous pastime. Philosophers espousing Stoic principles were banished from Rome by Vespasian in 71 CE⁷⁶⁰ and Domitian in 93 CE.⁷⁶¹ In addition, high profile aristocrats with apparently Stoic leanings, Arulenus Rusticus, Herennius Senecio and the son of Helvidius Priscus were executed by Domitian, and Dio states that many others perished because of their philosophising.⁷⁶² As discussed in Chapter 4, it is difficult to get a true picture of life under Domitian because his subsequent *damnatio memoriae* has clearly distorted the approach taken by writers publishing in the aftermath of his death.⁷⁶³ However, the execution of aristocrats appears to have much more to do with Domitian's distrust of certain aristocratic families than an aversion to philosophising in general and Stoicism in particular. Jones clearly establishes that those writers in favour with the Emperor, such as Martial and Silius Italicus, wrote about philosophers and philosophy or employed Stoic ideas in their writings without apparent ill effect.⁷⁶⁴

Provided that one was neither important enough to offer a potential threat to Domitian, nor wrote in a way that appeared to be critical of the established order, one was probably safe enough, albeit those whose philosophising encouraged crowd disturbance and thoughts, as Dio says, that were 'inappropriate for the times' might well face banishment or worse.⁷⁶⁵ Mason notes the coincidence of the banishment of philosophers by Domitian in 93 CE and the publication of the *Antiquities*, and categorises Josephus's presentation of Judaism as

⁷⁶⁰ Cass. Dio 65.13.

⁷⁶¹ Cass. Dio 67.13, Plin. *Ep.* 3.11, Suet. *Dom.* 10.2-4, Dio Chrysostom *Or.* 13.1.

⁷⁶² Cass. Dio 67.13.2-3. See also Suet. *Dom.* 10.3-4, Tac. *Agr.* 2.1, Plin. *Ep.* 7.19.5.

⁷⁶³ For an analysis of the literary atmosphere under Domitian, see Chapter 4 pp. 103-109.

⁷⁶⁴ Jones (1992) pp. 121-123. See also MacMullen (1966) pp. 93-94. Haaland (2005) p. 308 supposes an environment of greater danger to Josephus than I have done, largely by presenting those aristocrats who were executed as philosophers, rather than possible rivals to Domitian, and by assuming that Josephus would have been seen as a 'philosopher'. Even if Josephus was seen as important enough to worry Domitian, a distinctly unlikely hypothesis (see Chapter 4 pp. 82-90 for an analysis of Josephus's circle and readership), it seems unlikely that he would have been seen as a philosopher, as opposed to an historian who used, as many others did, philosophical terminology.

⁷⁶⁵ Cass. Dio 65.13.1-2 in relation to Vespasian's banishment of philosophers.

philosophy outside Greco-Roman society, and therefore not posing a potential cultural threat that philosophers within Greco-Roman society might be seen to do.⁷⁶⁶ This seems a difficult line to tread, particularly as Mason argues elsewhere that the *Antiquities* is presented to non-Jews as an ‘alternative’ to other life styles.⁷⁶⁷ In addition, as discussed in Chapter 3 (pp. 47-8), the presentation of Judaism as a philosophy is somewhat superficial, and designed to impress, rather than educate. There appears to have been a distinct difference between being a professional philosopher and one given to fashionable philosophical musings to display one’s intellectualism and cultural sympathies. Pliny, writing probably some 10 or so years after Domitian’s death, describes himself as the latter in one of his letters, albeit whether he would have openly described himself as such during Domitian’s reign is a matter of conjecture.⁷⁶⁸

7.5. Romans, Jews and Parthia

There is another facet of ethnicity to consider here. It has been argued by scholars that there were close ties between Judaea and Jews generally and the Parthian state at the end of the first century CE.⁷⁶⁹ If this were so, would the fact that a quasi-Parthian became a Jew run the risk of encouraging antipathy in the reader?

Albeit that some 100 years before the Jewish revolt, the Hasmonaean Antigonus and some Jews in Tarichaea had sided with Parthia against Rome,⁷⁷⁰ this should be seen more as opportunism rather than national antipathy⁷⁷¹ and evidence of Herod’s contacts with Parthia points only to contacts with Jews there.⁷⁷² Within the context of the *Jewish War*, Josephus indicates that the

⁷⁶⁶ Mason (1996b) p. 46.

⁷⁶⁷ Mason (1998). See Chapter 3 pp. 65-7.

⁷⁶⁸ Pliny *Ep.* 5.1. He reserved his praise of the younger Helvidius Priscus to after Domitian’s death (see e.g. *Ep.* 9.13).

⁷⁶⁹ Debevoise (1938) pp. 93-95, Neusner (1966) pp. 58-9 and Rajak (1998) pp. 311-2.

⁷⁷⁰ *BJ* 1.180, 250, Cass. Dio 40.28, *AJ* 14.119-20.

⁷⁷¹ Contra Debevoise (1938) p. 94.

⁷⁷² In addition to the Hyrcanus episode, when the Jews of Babylon accepted him as high priest and king (*AJ* 15.11-17), showing clearly that Jews in Babylonia were attached spiritually to Judaea, Herod obtained a High Priest

Jews in Judaea hoped for support against Rome from Jews across the Euphrates,⁷⁷³ but Agrippa makes the point that the Parthians would have prevented such assistance (albeit apparently not from Adiabene).⁷⁷⁴ The evidence otherwise from Josephus is ambiguous. Josephus claims to have written the *Jewish War* originally for Parthians and Babylonians, as well as Jews across the Euphrates⁷⁷⁵ although Rajak makes the point that the subject matter would have been somewhat more interesting for Jews than non-Jews.⁷⁷⁶

The evidence is therefore sparse as to whether there was any apparent connection between Judaea and Parthia such that the Roman reader of Josephus would feel there to be a natural connection between Jews within the Roman Empire and a long-time enemy of Rome. From just beyond this period, there is difficult-to-interpret evidence of the part, if any, played by the Jews of Mesopotamia during Trajan's campaigns there in 115-117 CE.⁷⁷⁷ Even if the evidence does point to native Jewish resistance at that time against Rome, it is hardly evidence of any attitude by Jews within the Roman Empire to Parthia in the previous century. It seems therefore that there is little if any evidence to show that Josephus's Roman readers would have seen Jews within the Empire as siding with Parthia during the period in question.

from Babylon (*AJ* 15.22) and engaged mercenaries from Babylon, settling them in Batanaea to protect the pilgrim caravans from Babylon to Jerusalem from bandit attack (*AJ* 17.24-31). See also *AJ* 15.14-19, *BJ* 1.434, 1.486.

⁷⁷³ *BJ* 1.5. The idea of support from Adiabene was not completely farfetched. Philo (*Leg.* 216) mentions that Petronius was mindful of Jews in Parthia when ordered by the Emperor Gaius to implement the erection of the Emperor's statue in the Temple. Agrippa I also points out their existence in his letter to Gaius (Philo *Leg.* 282).

⁷⁷⁴ *BJ* 2.388-9. Cassius Dio claims (66.4.3) that not only were the Jews assisted by many of their kinsmen (τῶν ὁμοῖθων) from the region around but also by many others not only from the Roman Empire but also from beyond the Euphrates. Even assuming this to have been true, whether many of those in the last category were from Adiabene is impossible to determine.

⁷⁷⁵ *BJ* 1.6.

⁷⁷⁶ Rajak (2002) p. 181.

⁷⁷⁷ See Smallwood (1976) pp. 415-421 on the role, if any, played by the Jews.

7.6. Euergetism

Euergetism, the doing of good deeds, plays a small but not unimportant part in the narrative when Josephus describes, in what is otherwise a narrative break between 20.48 (a moralising statement on God's bounty to those who worship him), and the demonstration of God's bounty to Izates (from 20.54 to the end of the narrative), a specific point about Helena's and Izates's charity to the Jerusalemites. The passage (20.49-20.53) describes Helena's desire to go to Jerusalem, and worship at the Temple of God, 'which was famous throughout the world' (20.49). While there, she alleviates the famine by the distribution of provisions, and Izates contributed a large sum of money also.⁷⁷⁸ The action was described by Josephus (20.53) as one of a number of good deeds (ἀγαθὰ) done for the city by the two royals.

Josephus prefaces the act of euergetism by specific reference to the Temple's fame and it is clear from elsewhere in Josephus's works and from Philo that Helena, in paying a visit to Jerusalem, was by no means alone as a distinguished visitor. Similar claims of fame and reverence throughout the world are made in the *Jewish War* (*BJ* 4.262, 5.17), Ptolemy III sacrificed there (*C. Ap* 2.48), Josephus alleges that Alexander sacrificed there (*AJ* 11.329-30), Antiochus Sidetes sent sacrifices and votive offerings (*AJ* 13.242), Marcus Agrippa sacrificed a hecatomb and feasted the populace (*AJ* 16.14, 55) and Vitellius when Governor of Syria sacrificed in the Temple in CE 37 (*AJ* 18.122). In addition, Philo claims that Augustus required daily sacrifices to be made for the Emperor and the Roman people (*Leg.* 157, 317), a practice continued until 66 CE (*BJ* 2.197).⁷⁷⁹ Josephus therefore appears to hope for two things from his reader. Firstly, an acknowledgement of the special nature of the Jewish Temple, and secondly Helena's place in a list of important personages.

⁷⁷⁸ Probably in CE 46/7 (per Feldman LCL 456 p. 27 note a) or possibly CE 45 (see Feldman LCL 456 p. 55 note e).

⁷⁷⁹ For further references to Gentile homage, see Chapter 3 pp. 45-6 and Chapter 6 pp. 163-4 n. 627. See also Schürer (1973-1986) vol. II pp. 309-313.

As to the good deeds themselves, they would have appeared a little different from what a Greco-Roman reader would have expected. Euergetism had been a long established concept by Josephus's time, and although the original Hellenistic concept was inextricably intertwined with the moral response to the receipt of largesse, by early Roman imperial times, it would appear, both from the writings of Cicero (*De Officiis*) and Seneca (*De Beneficiis*) and from numerous inscriptions that survive, that the concept in Rome of reciprocity had mutated to that of patronage, in other words an inequality between the donor and donee and a focus on civic transactions, rather than private ones.⁷⁸⁰ However, the original Aristotelian concept of the acquisition of virtue through great expenditure would still have been relevant.⁷⁸¹

In any event, patronage did not imply disinterest in the outcome.⁷⁸² It is very difficult to believe that Seneca's Stoic expectation that the donor should be indifferent to material return – 'In benefits the book-keeping is simple – so much is paid out; if anything comes back, it is gain, if nothing comes back, there is no loss. I made the gift for the sake of giving' – was ever more than philosophical musing,⁷⁸³ and, whether by receipt of municipal honours in return, or the permanent record of the donor's wealth and prestige in plastic form, there is a vast body of evidence that reciprocal civic euergetism was part of the fabric of society in the first century CE. Although such behaviour in Rome was, by then, confined to the Emperor, in Hellenistic cities of the empire, many local worthies contributed money for public buildings, shows and, in times of famine, bread.

The picture so far presented is of Helena, as a local worthy, honouring the Temple (albeit as a Jew rather than as a pagan), and acquiring virtue, a pervading theme throughout the narrative,

⁷⁸⁰ Albeit Joubert (2001) pp. 23-4 makes the point that the impersonality and impermanence of euergetic relationships can distinguish them from patronage.

⁷⁸¹ Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 2.7.4.

⁷⁸² See Griffin (2003) p. 94.

⁷⁸³ *De Beneficiis* 1.2.3-4, trans. Basore LCL 310, albeit Seneca does recognise that benefits can exist.

through good deeds to her newly acquired ‘home’ city. There are however differences between her deeds and euergetism as known to the Greco-Roman world. In the first instance, there is no obvious reciprocity involved. Josephus may say that her memory lived on, as it would have done if the generosity had been recorded in epigraphic form, and that may or may not have been her intention, but Josephus presents the act as entirely selfless, a major contrast to his description of Herod’s euergetism.⁷⁸⁴ This may have appeared slightly odd to the Roman reader, for whom, as Paul Veyne put it, ‘voluntary euergetism did not exist in Rome. As for euergetism *ob honorem*, its motives were political ambition rather than social zeal’.⁷⁸⁵ In addition, if all of Rome believed as Juvenal and Tacitus appeared to do, namely that Jews only looked after their own, the effect upon the Roman reader might have been less than Josephus would have liked.⁷⁸⁶

7.7. Dreams

The phenomenon of the historiographical reporting of dreams, which were closely related in the Greco-Roman mind with divination and prophecy as portents of the future and, in particular, the future greatness of individuals, was well-established in the Ancient World.⁷⁸⁷

Herodotus asserts that dreams and other portents were often a means of divine communication

⁷⁸⁴ Although Herod’s distribution of money and food at a time of famine (15.299-316) brought about a ‘reversal of attitude among the masses’, Josephus would have his reader believe that Herod’s real motivation was not selflessness, but a desire to seize an opportunity to change the hatred of his subjects towards him, and to regenerate the economy so that revenues from taxation of farming profits accrued. His more usual euergetism, that of civic building, is variously described by Josephus as glory seeking, homage to Caesar and security in the case of civil insurrection. This can be seen in relation to Sebaste (15.292-8, 16.136-141) and more generally in 16.142-159, particularly 16.150-155 – ‘Herod loved honours ... he was led to display generosity whenever there was reason to hope for future remembrance or present reputation’ (16.153, trans. Marcus LCL 410).

⁷⁸⁵ Veyne (1990) p. 236. Veyne sees the corn dole in Rome not as euergetism, but as a state institution, established by law. In any event, according to Fronto (2nd century CE), ‘food-largesse is a weaker incentive than shows; by largesses of food only the proletariat on the corn register are conciliated singly and individually, whereas by the shows the whole population is kept in good humour’ (Fronto *Correspondence* 17, trans. Haines LCL 113). Goodman (1997) p. 26 argues that ‘the aim of such ‘evergetism’ [conspicuous expenditure on fellow citizens] was not so much charity as insurance in the winning of political support’.

⁷⁸⁶ Juvenal *Satires*. 14.103-4, Tac. *Hist.* 5.5.1.

⁷⁸⁷ See Dodds (1951) p. 107 and the categorisation of dreams. Monobazus’s dream would seem to fall within the established category of ‘oracle’ dream.

with mortals⁷⁸⁸ and tells of two such dreams of greatness attending Cyrus the Great's birth by his grandfather Astyages⁷⁸⁹ and that Pericles's mother Agariste dreamt that she would give birth to a lion.⁷⁹⁰ Aeschylus has Clytemnestra dreaming of giving birth to a snake, who then draws blood from her breast.⁷⁹¹ Xenophon states that the gods 'warn whomsoever they will in sacrifices, in omens, in voices, and in dreams'⁷⁹² and Dionysius reports that both Aeneas and Latinus were visited by deities in their sleep⁷⁹³ and that Latinus's divinely inspired dreams prompted the Senate to take action to propitiate the gods.⁷⁹⁴ Cicero tells us that when Hecuba was pregnant, she dreamt that she would give birth to a flaming torch.⁷⁹⁵ Diodorus too tells of divinely inspired dreams in his tale of Onomarchus the Phocian⁷⁹⁶ and Plutarch, in his *Life of Alexander*, tells his reader that 'the night before that on which the marriage was consummated, the bride dreamed that there was a peal of thunder and that a thunder-bolt fell upon her womb, and that thereby much fire was kindled, which broke into flames that travelled all about, and then was extinguished'.⁷⁹⁷

Often, however, such dream narratives were often accompanied by the historian's obvious scepticism of what presumably was a commonly held view.⁷⁹⁸ An early even-handed view of such phenomena is expressed by Isocrates, who says, when describing the portentous birth of King Evagoras of Salamis,

⁷⁸⁸ See examples provided by Shauf (2015) p. 22 and Aune (1988) p. 134.

⁷⁸⁹ Hdt. 1.107.1, 1.108.1.

⁷⁹⁰ Hdt. 6.131. However, Herodotus seems to have believed that not all such dreams were heaven sent, as seen in Artabanus's explanation of his dream to Xerxes (7.16B).

⁷⁹¹ Cho. 32-41, 527-550.

⁷⁹² Eq. Mag. 9.9.

⁷⁹³ Roman Antiquities 1.57.4.

⁷⁹⁴ Ibid. 7.68-9.

⁷⁹⁵ Div. 1.21.

⁷⁹⁶ 16.33.1-2.

⁷⁹⁷ Vit. Alex. 2.2, trans. Perrin LCL 99. Luz (1985-2002) gives other examples.

⁷⁹⁸ The extent of whether all or only some in the Ancient World believed in the possibility of divinely inspired revelatory dreams is analysed at length by Harris (2009), particularly in relation to the Flavian era (pp. 186-199). His conclusion that there was in general considerable scepticism matters not for these purposes; the issue is whether the Greco-Roman reader would have treated Josephus's dream sequence as a normal facet of historiography.

I prefer to say nothing of the portents, the oracles, the visions appearing in dreams, from which the impression might be gained that he was of superhuman birth, not because I disbelieve the reports, but that I may make it clear to all that I am so far from resorting to invention in speaking of his deeds that even of those matters which are in fact true I dismiss such as are known only to the few and of which not all the citizens are cognizant.⁷⁹⁹

More directly sceptical, Diodorus writes somewhat later of a dream of Alexander in which a remedy for his sick commander Ptolemy was shown to him, ‘which some attributed to Divine Providence’⁸⁰⁰ and also about a false soothsayer during the slave revolt of 133 BCE in Sicily, who ‘had an aptitude for magic and the working of wonders. He claimed to foretell the future, by divine command, through dreams, and because of his talent along these lines deceived many’.⁸⁰¹

In this respect, what might appear to the modern reader as an oddly anhistorical introduction to the Adiabene narrative sits well within the Greco-Roman tradition. Monobazus’s experience, would not have seen out of place in an historical work and would have immediately alerted the reader’s attention to the significance of what was about to be narrated. As Pelling puts it, ‘the one thing a reader immediately knows about a historiographical dream is that it must have been significant in some way, significant enough to have made it into the historical record.’⁸⁰² In addition, because dreams were closely related to other mantic phenomena, the astute and well-read reader might have connected this aspect of the narrative with Josephus’s own prophetic powers, as described in the *Jewish War*, when foretelling of Vespasian’s future accession to the Principate.⁸⁰³ Josephus also describes without qualification the phenomena experienced before

⁷⁹⁹ Isoc. *Antid. Evagoras* 9.21, trans. Van Hook LCL 373.

⁸⁰⁰ Diod Sic.17.103.7-8.

⁸⁰¹ Diod. Sic. 34/35.2.5, trans. Walton LCL 423.

⁸⁰² Pelling (1997) p. 199.

⁸⁰³ *BJ* 3.401, as reported by Tacitus (*Hist.* 5.13) and Suetonius (*Vesp.* 4.5).

the revolt in 66 CE, including a voice in the Temple, which was also reported by Tacitus, without any apparent scepticism as to its occurrence.⁸⁰⁴

There are, however, differences between Josephus's narration of Monobazus's experience and the more usual historiographical reporting. In the first instance, Josephus does not directly tell his reader that Monobazus had a dream. Instead, he is a little more circumspect, only telling us that Monobazus was συγκαθεύδων, translated by Feldman as 'as he was sleeping', but possible also to understand as 'as he lay down to sleep'. In addition, Josephus tells us that he *thought* he heard a voice' (φωνῆς τινος ἔδοξεν ὑπακούειν), introducing a note of uncertainty. The other difference is that, unlike most epiphanic Greco-Roman dream sequences, no vision appears, only a voice is heard, and we do not know to whom the voice belongs (20.18).

The conclusion to be drawn is that Josephus wishes to adopt a well-known classical signpost of greatness, and mark Izates out as special from the start of the narrative. However, he appears not to adopt the convention completely and perhaps a small note of scepticism might have been detected by the less credulous reader, with whom no doubt Cicero's musings may have struck a chord: 'But how often, pray, do you find anyone who pays any attention to dreams or who understands or remembers them?'⁸⁰⁵

7.8. The role of God and Fate

Although the central role of the Divine in the Adiabene narrative may appear odd in terms of modern historiography, it would have been very familiar to the first century CE Greco-Roman reader. From the days of Herodotus, the role of external agents beyond human control in the affairs of men and the course of history was embraced, to a greater or lesser extent, and in

⁸⁰⁴ BJ 6.300, Tac. *Hist.* 5.13.

⁸⁰⁵ Div. 2. 60 (125).

varying ways, by all Greco-Roman historians except Thucydides. What exactly the external agency was differs among historians and, in particular, what the meaning of such terms as τύχη, μοῖρα, ἀνάγκη, χρεών, εἰμαρμένη, φύσις and πρόνοια might be also differs between historians. Moreover, these words are often used on different occasions inconsistently within a given historian's work. Josephus is similarly imprecise. The starting point, however, is to examine Josephus's clearly theistically focussed Adiabene narrative against other historiographers' articulated views on the divinely controlled course of history.

For Herodotus, there were 'many clear indications of the divine ordering of things'.⁸⁰⁶

Polybius, although in many respects a rationalist, allows that in some cases, the cause of events may well be divinely inspired:

as regards things the causes of which it is impossible or difficult for a mere man to understand, we may perhaps be justified in getting out of the difficulty by setting them down to the action of a god or chance.⁸⁰⁷

Dionysius of Halicarnassus appears to have had far fewer qualms than Polybius about ascribing the events of history to the supernatural. In particular, the concept of divine justice, rewarding the virtuous and punishing the malefactor, is a recurrent theme for Dionysius, as it is for Josephus. For Dionysius,

It would be in harmony with a formal history and in the interest of correcting those who think that the gods are neither pleased with the honours they receive from men nor displeased with impious and unjust actions, to make known the epiphany of the goddess at that time, not once, but twice, as it is recorded in the books of the pontiffs, to the end that by those who are more scrupulous about preserving the

⁸⁰⁶ 9.100.2. He refers to the fact that the Greek victories at Plataea and Mykale took place on the same day. Coincidence of events on the same day as being divinely inspired is also a common theme in the works of Josephus. See for example *BJ* 2.457, where the massacre of the Roman garrison and the massacre of the Jews of Caesarea by their Gentile neighbours is described as occurring at 'the same day and at the same hour, as it were, by the hand of Providence' (trans. Thackeray LCL 203).

⁸⁰⁷ 36.17.1-2, trans. Paxton LCL 161. In this instance, Polybius uses τύχη and εἰμαρμένη as agents of events outside human control. Like Josephus, neither Polybius nor Herodotus appear to advance a particularly coherent approach to Fate or Fortune, at times ascribing to it the meaning of random chance, and at times a consciousness of purpose that appears divine, what is often called Providence (πρόνοια) (see Marincola (2001) pp. 143-4). Walbank (1990) p. 59 suggests that Polybius's and Herodotus's incoherence and inconsistency may be characteristic of popular Greek religious thought in general. See also Squires (1993) pp. 155-166, Attridge (1976) pp. 154-165 and Gruen (2011b) pp. 150-1 for discussion of fate and free will in Hellenistic historiography. However, for Polybius, in 36.17, it is clear that these two words are synonymous with the divine (ἐπὶ τὸ θεῖον) (see also Polybius 10.5.8 and 10.9.2 for similar usage).

opinions concerning the gods which they have received from their ancestors such belief may be maintained firm and undisturbed by misgivings, and that those who, despising the customs of their forefathers, hold that the gods have no power over man's reason, may, preferably, retract their opinion, or, if they are incurable, that they may become still more odious to the gods and more wretched.⁸⁰⁸

This is a sentiment echoed by Josephus, who claims that we learn from the example of Daniel ‘how mistaken are the Epicureans, who exclude Providence (πρόνοια) from human life and refuse to believe that God ([τὸν] θεὸν) governs its affairs or that the universe is directed by a blessed and immortal Being’ (10.278).⁸⁰⁹ Tacitus, too, although allowing for chance, in many instances seems to view the course of history as ordered by divine intervention although, as Griffin says ‘it will be clear that Tacitus was consistent neither in adhering to any one metaphysical explanation for events ... nor in regarding portents and prodigies as reliable indicators of any of these or, at times, as being of any real significance at all’.⁸¹⁰

This concept of divine reward for piety, so obviously the leitmotif in the Adiabene narrative, is also taken up by Diodorus Siculus. ‘Reverence for the deity (εὐσέβεια) in so far transcends all other virtues as the gods themselves are in all respects superior to mortals’.⁸¹¹ Like Josephus, Xenophon makes it clear that ‘one could mention many other incidents, both among Greeks and barbarians, to prove that the gods do not fail to take heed of the wicked or of those who do unrighteous things’.⁸¹² Diodorus also believes that ‘to those who seek after virtue, he [God] (ὁ θεὸς) grants rewards appropriate to their virtue, and to those who indulge in greed or any other vice he appoints prompt and fitting punishment’.⁸¹³ Cicero states that ‘in piety, in devotion to religion, and in that special wisdom which consists in the recognition of the truth that the world

⁸⁰⁸ *Roman Antiquities* 8.56.1, trans. Cary LCL 372. It is probably an ironic coincidence that Domitian, Josephus's claimed supporter, was also seen as pious (See Jones (1992) pp. 99 -109).

⁸⁰⁹ Trans. Marcus LCL 326.

⁸¹⁰ Griffin (2010) pp.171.

⁸¹¹ 8.15.4, trans. Oldfather LCL 340. See also 5.8.1-3. Compare *C. Ap.* 2.170, where the virtues are a subset of religion, rather than vice versa.

⁸¹² *Hell.* 5.4.1, trans. Brownson LCL 89.

⁸¹³ 28.4, trans. Oldfather LCL 409.

is swayed and directed by divine disposal, we have excelled every race and every nation'.⁸¹⁴ Josephus's emphasis on *πρόνοια* as God's reward for piety may have also struck a chord with the Greco-Roman reader. Attridge comments on its use by Stoics and the separation in later Stoicism between *πρόνοια* and *εἰμαρμένη*, the latter indicating an element of fatalism, rather than divine causation.⁸¹⁵

However, the message of the Adiabene narrative of the centrality of God's involvement in human affairs stands out as being at one end of a spectrum. Cohen's view that 'the God-oriented historiography of the *Jewish War* is unclassical', which he presumably could have equally applied to the *Antiquities*, if not more so, overstates the case.⁸¹⁶ Clearly there were some historians, notably Thucydides and to a lesser extent Polybius, for whom the Gods played little or no role, but there were others, like Dionysius and Diodorus, who thought that the divine had some role to play. None, however, relentlessly pushed an agenda in the way that Josephus did.

7.9. Reversals of Fortune

Josephus's emphasis on Fortune, and its changeability, in the interchange between Izates and Artabanus, has been examined in Chapter 5 (pp. 136-7) in relation to Josephus's use of the concept elsewhere in the *Antiquities*. In this chapter, the concept is examined in relation to its use by historians and others in the Greco-Roman world, to determine how the Greco-Roman reader would have viewed this interchange.

⁸¹⁴ Cicero *Har. resp.* 9 (19), trans. Watts LCL 158. Polybius is a little more cautious. Antiochus Epiphanes, after attempting to ransack the sanctuary of Artemis at Elymais, was 'smitten with madness, as some people say, owing to certain manifestation of divine displeasure' (31.9.4).

⁸¹⁵ Attridge (1976) pp. 157-8.

⁸¹⁶ Cohen (1982) p. 377.

A change of fortune was one of the great motives of classical literature. Aristotle makes the point that the greatest tragic plots are those where recognition and change of fortune are closely interrelated:

Now, because recognition is recognition between people, some cases involve only the relation of one party to the other (when the other's identity is clear), while in others there is need for double recognition ... These, then, are two components of the plot - reversal and recognition (περιπέτεια καὶ ἀναγνώρισις).⁸¹⁷

This concept appears in many forms of classical literature in addition to historiography, for example Chariton's romantic novel *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, with its mistaken identities and changes of fortune for the two lovers.

Within the historiographical world, sentiment on changes in fortune belong to a collection of philosophical reflections whose repetition was the mark of a well-read historian.⁸¹⁸ For Polybius, 'all historians ... have impressed on us that the soundest education and training for a life of active politics is the study of History, and that the surest and indeed the only method of learning how to bear bravely the vicissitudes of fortune is to recall the calamities of others.'⁸¹⁹ In addition, he believed that 'sole test of a perfect man to be the power of bearing high-mindedly (μεγαλοψύχως) and bravely the most complete reverses of fortune (μεταβολὰς τῆς τύχης).'⁸²⁰ This passage is interesting in a number of respects. Not only does the concept of μεταβολή occur, but this is linked to magnanimity (μεγαλοψύχος). For Izates and his family, as remarked upon in Chapters 5 and 6, the conversion to Judaism is also a μεταβολή, a change of life and implicitly a change in fortune, and Josephus makes a point early in the narrative to show Izates's magnanimity by describing his clemency towards his brothers. Josephus's

⁸¹⁷ *Poet.* 1452b, trans. Halliwell LCL 199. See also 1452a 'Reversal is a change (μεταβολή) to the opposite direction of events'.

⁸¹⁸ Feldman (1998a) pp. 565-6.

⁸¹⁹ Polyb. 1.1.2, trans. Paxton LCL 128.

⁸²⁰ Polyb. 6.2.6, trans. Paxton LCL 138.

reinforcement of the message of Izates as an exemplary man of virtue would not have been lost on his Greco-Roman audience.

The sentiments expressed by Artabanus and Izates are clearly part of this tradition. Compare the words of Artabanus

I have been brought low by a turn of fortune (μεταβολῆς) Cast an eye at the instability of fortune (τὸ τῆς τύχης ἄστατον) (20.56-7)

and Izates, in restoring Artabanus to his former dignity, who

took into consideration the fact that changes of fortune are the lot of all men (ὥς κοινὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις αἱ μεταβολαὶ τῆς τύχης) (20.61)

with those of Scipio, as recorded by Polybius, at the moment of his triumph over the Carthaginian Hasdrubal:

For at the moment of our greatest triumph and of disaster to our enemies to reflect on our own situation and on the possible reversal of circumstances, and generally to bear in mind at the season of success the mutability (ἐπισφάλειαν) of Fortune, is like a great and perfect man, a man in short worthy to be remembered.⁸²¹

Diodorus too remarks upon the phenomenon: ‘for who, taking thought of the inconstancies of human life, would not be astonished at the alternating ebb and flow of fortune? For human life, as if some god were at the helm, moves in a cycle through good and evil alternately for all time.’⁸²² Therefore, by the emphatic repetition of the concept of Fate and its mutability over the course of paragraphs 20.56-20.61, Josephus appears to be attempting both to introduce some Greek historiographic concepts, thus furthering his aim to be taken as a serious historian, but also to present Izates (and Artabanus) to the reader as heroic, and worthy of inclusion in the historical narrative.

⁸²¹ Polyb. 38.21.2, trans. Paxton LCL 161. Compare the very similar sentiments apparently expressed by Josephus himself upon his captivity after the siege of Jotapata (*BJ* 3.394-5).

⁸²² Diod. Sic. 18.59.5-6, trans. Greer LCL 377.

7.10. Conversion

Although it would appear to be the case that Jews did not have a mission to convert Gentiles,⁸²³ there is evidence that some authors, and indeed the state, found the attraction to Judaism of Gentiles, particularly Romans, as an activity that was troublesome. Both Cohen and Feldman believe that the location of the narrative meant that Josephus could talk freely about conversion in Adiabene because it was under Parthian domination and therefore no immediate concern to the Romans. This presupposes that otherwise a stridently pro-conversion narrative would have been problematic.⁸²⁴ Feldman additionally believes that ‘their abandonment of the Parthian gods could well be understood and applauded by the Romans’.⁸²⁵

More generally, there is some evidence of official antipathy to Romans becoming enamoured of Jewish customs. Valerius Maximus, a first century CE author, through his 4th to 5th century epitomators Januarius Nepotianus and Julius Paris, appears to connect expulsions from Rome in 139 BCE with Jews, according to Nepotianus ‘because they attempted to transmit their sacred rites to the Romans’, and according to Paris, because ‘the Jews infected the Roman customs with the cult of Jupiter Sabazius’.⁸²⁶ Paris’s conjunction of Jews and Jupiter Sabazius is clearly confused and, although it is likely that, as in 19 CE (see below), a periodic sweep of foreign cults was made by the authorities in 139 BCE, the number of Jews in Rome at that time is likely to have been small (being before Pompey’s conquests in Judaea in 63 BCE) and therefore Jews were unlikely to represent a threat to the state or even be noticeable. Livy

⁸²³ McKnight (1991), Goodman (1994), Feldman (2003) p. 116, Bird (2010) p. 149.

⁸²⁴ Cohen (1987) p. 425, Feldman (1998b) p. 111 n. 37 and (1993) p. 566 n. 152. Both additionally believe that Adiabene would be viewed with approval as resisting Parthia. Feldman and Cohen’s conclusion appears to be incorrect and Romans would have viewed Adiabene as a friend of Parthia and therefore hostile to Rome, in spite of Izates’s wise words to Vardanes (20.70-71) (see Chapter 5 pp. 133-4).

⁸²⁵ Feldman (1987) p. 52. Feldman’s view that Romans would have applauded apostasy from non-Roman deities seems unsupported. That there was ‘state religion’ is clearly correct, particularly in the post Augustan era, and at times foreign cults were proscribed, but there is no evidence that Romans were affronted by the existence of non-Roman deities outside the Empire. Indeed the evidence is the other way, of Roman adoption of non-traditional deities, particularly Greek and Egyptian (see Kaizer (2007) pp. 448-450).

⁸²⁶ See Rutgers (1998) pp. 171-186.

(Valerius Maximus's possible source),⁸²⁷ in writing about the expulsions more contemporaneously, does not mention Jews at all and Valerius Maximus, writing at the time of Claudius, may well be reflecting issues in his own day rather than two hundred years previously.

There appear to have been (further) expulsions in 19 CE, albeit the sources for the expulsions, Tacitus, Suetonius, Cassius Dio and Josephus, differ as to the nature of those events.⁸²⁸ All agree that there were deportations of Jews and proscriptions of Jewish rites and it would appear that these could have happened as part of a pattern of periodic repression by the authorities of alien cults on public order grounds. However, only Dio gives the reason as proselytising. We do not know Dio's source and, in writing from over two hundred years later, he is somewhat distant from events. Josephus states that the banishment occurred as a result of the activities of four Jewish tricksters, who stole gold intended for the Temple in Jerusalem from a Roman matron who adopted Jewish practices (νομίμοις προσεληλυθυῖαν τοῖς Ἰουδαϊκοῖς).⁸²⁹ Stern suggests that this corroborates Dio's story.⁸³⁰ We are indeed told that the principal trickster played the part of an interpreter of the Mosaic law and its wisdom (προσεποιεῖτο μὲν ἐξηγεῖσθαι σοφίαν νόμων τῶν Μωσέως), from which it is possible to infer that the 'profession' was one carried on by others, although to what extent is unknown. However, that four thieves could trigger a mass exodus seems unlikely.⁸³¹

Three Roman writers before or contemporaneous with Josephus speak of or allude to conversion in negative terms. Seneca complains that 'Meanwhile the customs of this accursed

⁸²⁷ See Stern (1974-1984) vol. I p. 357.

⁸²⁸ Tac. *Ann.* 2. 85; Suet. *Tib.* 36; Cass. *Dio* 57.18:5a; *AJ* 18.81-4.

⁸²⁹ *AJ* 18.81-82.

⁸³⁰ Stern op. cit. vol. II p. 365.

⁸³¹ A third proscription or expulsion in 41 or 49 CE mentioned by Cassius Dio (60.6.6), Suetonius (*Claudius* 25.4) and Acts (18:2) does not seem to have involved converts.

race have gained such influence that they are now received throughout all the world'.⁸³² Tacitus asserts that

the worst rascals among other peoples, renouncing their ancestral religions, always kept sending tribute and contributing to Jerusalem, thereby increasing the wealth of the Jews Those who are converted to their ways follow the same practice [circumcision] and the earliest lesson they receive is to despise the gods, to disown their country and to regard their parents, children and brothers as of little account.⁸³³

Juvenal complains of converts that, 'with their habit of despising the laws of Rome (*Romanas autem soliti contemnere leges*), they study, observe and revere the Judaic code'.⁸³⁴

When taken together, the evidence is not strong for widespread concern at Jewish conversion, whether by active proselytism or otherwise. That Jews were viewed as foreign and oddly unsyncretistic in their attitude to religion, is likely to have put them from time to time in the camp of foreign undesirables in the eyes of the state. The fact that they practised rites attractive to some Romans while rejecting the Roman gods would undoubtedly have annoyed those Romans of a traditional religious bent. Whether this translates into a commonly held negative view of Jewish conversion is open to question.

7.11. Circumcision

At first glance, the lengthy narrative on Izates's decision as to whether or not to be circumcised sits oddly with Josephus's intention of showing that Judaism could be attractive to those not

⁸³² Seneca *De Superstitione* apud Augustine *Civ. D.* 6.11.

⁸³³ Tac. *Hist* 5.5.1-2, trans. Moore and Jackson LCL 249.

⁸³⁴ Juvenal *Satires* 14.96-106, trans. Braund LCL 91. Epictetus (in Arrian *Dissertationes*, II, 9:19-21) talks of both those who adopt the customs of Jews, but are not Jews, and one who becomes 'a Jew in fact and is also called one', but with no pejorative sentiment. The phrase in Horace *Sat.* 1.4.142-3 'ac veluti te Iudaei cogemus in hanc concedere turbam', usually translated as 'like the Jews, we will compel you to join our throng' is taken by Feldman (1993) p. 299 and some others as evidence of the missionary zeal of the Jews and its unpopularity. The context is Horace's apology for satire of which this phrase is part of the conclusion. As Nolland (1979) p. 353 points out, the previous efforts within the satire have been aimed at peaceful persuasion, the last, in antithesis, essentially says 'if all else fails, my brother poets and I will force you (with unsaid brute force) to agree with me'. Compulsion is very different from conversion. The allusion to the Jews, therefore, is not to conversion but to mob action. As Cicero remarks (*Flac.* 66) Jews could be pushy when in crowds. In a more peaceful way, Suetonius talks of crowds of Jews flocking to Caesar's funeral (*Iul.* 84) and Jewish crowds are encountered again in Josephus's tale of the impersonator of Alexander, Herod's son, and his acclaim on reaching Rome (*AJ* 17.330).

born a Jew, particularly those who manifestly displayed Greco-Roman heroic qualities. A view held among some modern scholars is that the Romans found the practice revolting⁸³⁵ and if this view is correct, for Josephus to have emphasised this particular precept of male Jewish identity would have been counterproductive, particularly as the message of the narrative of the benefits obtained from God's pronoia could have been made without mentioning the circumcision drama.

However, the picture may have been somewhat more complex. There are numerous surviving Greek and Latin texts from before or contemporaneous with Josephus that mention directly or indirectly the circumcision practices of Jews.⁸³⁶ For the most part, circumcision appears to be a trope, an epithet that is customarily attached to the noun 'Jew', indicating that most readers would associate circumcision with 'Jew'.⁸³⁷ At times the use of 'the circumcised' obviates the need to use the word Jew at all, so strong is the connection.⁸³⁸ However, it is difficult to detect downright disgust at the practice. It is clear that some of these authors saw the practice as odd, and Strabo sees the practice as part of a number of superstitions.⁸³⁹ Juvenal mentions circumcision in an attack on Jewish proselytes but does not remark upon the practice, other than to ascribe to it the definitive act of embracing Jewish practice.⁸⁴⁰

⁸³⁵ See for example Williams (1998) p. 56, Balsdon (1979) pp. 216, 231, Whittaker (1984) p. 80, Smallwood (1976) p. 431, Isaac (2004) p. 472, Feldman (1993) pp. 153-5. Contrast Gruen (2002) pp. 51-52: 'The texts reveal neither intolerance nor racism'.

⁸³⁶ For example Hdt. 2.104 (depending on who Herodotus's Σύριοι οἱ ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ might be. Josephus appears to think they were Jews (*AJ* 8.262, *C. Ap.* 1.168). See Stern (1974-1984) vol. I pp. 3-4), Strabo *Geographica* 16.2.37, 4.9, 17.2.5, Hor. *Sat.* I, 9.69-70, Apion *Aegyptiaca* apud Josephus *C. Ap.* 2.137, Pers. *Satires* 5.184, Petron. *Sat.* 68.8, 102.14, Martial *Epigrams* 7.30, 11.94, Tac. *Hist.* 5.5.2, Juvenal *Satires* 14.99.

⁸³⁷ For example Timagenes (apud Josephus *AJ* 13.319) who mentions that the Ituraeans were joined by the Hasmonaean Aristobulus I to the Jews by circumcision, Petronius (*Sat.* 102.13-14) where, in jest, a character suggests various ethnic disguises to escape pursuers, including circumcision, 'so that we all look like Jews' and Horace (*Sat.* 1.9.60-78) 'Would you affront the circumcised Jews'.

⁸³⁸ Pers. *Sat.* 5.184 'You silently twitch your lips, turning pale at the Sabbath of the circumcised'. Martial *Epigrams* 11.94 who speaks of his rival as 'the circumcised poet'. That Suetonius (*Dom.* 12.2) tells us of an incident in his youth (90s CE) whereby an old man was stripped to discover whether he was circumcised, and thus trying to escape the *Fiscus Iudaicus*, reinforces the point, at least in Rome.

⁸³⁹ Strabo *Geog.* 16.2.37.

⁸⁴⁰ Juvenal *Satires* 14.99, as does Petronius *Fragmenta* 37 (Stern (1974-1984) p. 494).

Both Martial⁸⁴¹ and Tacitus⁸⁴² seem to have believed in male Jewish lechery, a very un-Roman attribute, but it would be wrong from the texts to attribute this definitely to circumcision. Stern⁸⁴³ includes two of Martial's more obscure epigrams that he believes are to do with Jewish male circumcision, but in reality may relate simply relate to perceived Jewish sexual proclivity. The first, Epigram 7.35, certainly has a reference to a Jewish slave, but is so obscure that it is impossible to say with any certainty that the reference is to circumcision, as opposed to the size of the slave's penis, presumably another reference to licentiousness. The second, Epigram 7.82, involves a comic actor, Menophilus, inadvertently dropping his penile sheath to reveal that he was circumcised, but Martial does not describe him as Jewish. Even if he was, the comedy appears once again to relate to sexual appetite.⁸⁴⁴ The worst that can be found directly critical of circumcision comes from Petronius⁸⁴⁵ where a slave (presumably but not necessarily Jewish) is described as having two faults: he is circumcised and he snores. To equate circumcision with snoring is hardly vituperative!

However, there is clearly distaste. Philo acknowledges this when he talks of the practice being ridiculed, in his introduction to *The Special Laws*.⁸⁴⁶ Herodotus⁸⁴⁷, Diodorus⁸⁴⁸ and Strabo⁸⁴⁹ all refer to the practice as being of Egyptian origin, as indeed, so Diodorus and Strabo claim, were the Jews themselves. Being associated with Egyptians was not ideal, particularly if the association was with Egyptian cults and superstition.⁸⁵⁰ Tacitus, famously excoriating about the

⁸⁴¹ *Epigrams* 7.30, 11.94.

⁸⁴² *Hist.* 5.5.2.

⁸⁴³ Stern (1974-1984) vol. I pp. 525, 526-7.

⁸⁴⁴ Contra Schäfer (1997) pp. 100-101, who believes that all three overtly sexual epigrams directly connect licentiousness with circumcision.

⁸⁴⁵ *Satyricon* 68.8.

⁸⁴⁶ *Special Laws* 1.2. Josephus mentions Apion's ridicule of the practice (*C. Ap.* 2.137).

⁸⁴⁷ 2.104.1-3.

⁸⁴⁸ *Historiae* 1.28.2-3, 1.55.5.

⁸⁴⁹ *Geographica* 17.2.5.

⁸⁵⁰ See Balsdon (1979) pp. 68-70 ('Egyptians generally were regarded by Romans with hatred and contempt') and Isaac (2004) pp. 352-370. For a less negative view, see Gruen (2011) pp. 76-114. However, I do not interpret, unlike Schäfer ((1997) p. 95), Strabo's narrative in *Geographica* 16.2.37, which combines a description of the Jews' superstitious practices, of which circumcision is one, with a negative description of (probably) Hasmonaean imperialism, to mean that Strabo's negativity in respect to circumcision goes beyond disapproval of superstition.

Jews, associates circumcision with a desire for separateness, in other words misanthropy, which leads to rejection of all things Roman.⁸⁵¹ It is also clear that Macc 1.14-15, which relates the fashion for epispasm amongst 2nd century athletic Jewish Hellenisers, shows by inference Gentile distaste.⁸⁵²

It seems to be the case that, in the first half of the second century, legislation was introduced banning circumcision, probably under Hadrian (117-138 CE), and this legislation was later repealed under Hadrian's successor Antoninus Pius. Precisely what the earlier legislation was, when and under what circumstances it was enacted and to whom it applied, is the subject of debate.⁸⁵³ Smallwood makes the point that Juvenal's 14th Satire, which mentions circumcision as the ultimate stage of becoming a Jew, without comment as to its illegality, was written in c. 128 CE. It is however, dangerous to extrapolate backwards to the 90s CE when Josephus published the *Antiquities*. The legislation may well have reflected a possible obsession by Trajan to eradicate something seen as un-Roman. Cassius Dio tells us that Domitian banned castration because his elder brother Titus had had a great fondness for eunuchs.⁸⁵⁴ To extrapolate backwards from Domitian's legislation that castration was deeply censured by all the Flavians would clearly be an error.

In all of this analysis, we are faced with a fundamental problem. It is very difficult to separate circumcision from Jewishness, for the reasons articulated above. I do not know of non-Jewish literature from the period that looks at circumcision other than, in some way, attaching itself to Jewishness. If we take the view that, to a greater or lesser extent, Jews were not held in particularly high esteem in the 90s, and that the *Antiquities*, with its heroic model, was meant

⁸⁵¹ *Hist.* 5.5.2. A trait acknowledged by Josephus (*AJ* 1.192, *C. Ap.* 2.258).

⁸⁵² However, there is evidence that not all Jewish athletes made efforts to disguise their circumcision (Kerkeslager (1997) p. 26).

⁸⁵³ See Smallwood (1959, 1961), Schäfer (1997) pp. 103-5, Cohen (1999) p. 213 n. 34.

⁸⁵⁴ Cass. Dio 67.2.1-3.

to readdress this, then it is very difficult to view circumcision separately from wider views of Jews. We can draw analogues from plastic art (mostly pottery), that show Greeks with uncircumcised penises and barbarians with circumcised ones, and a Greek view of bodily perfection that prevented anyone from competing in the Olympic Games with a deformity, but whether that gets us beyond an impression that the Greco-Roman world thought it un-Hellenic is doubtful. The generalised point that Rome was a melting pot in the early Empire of different cultures and practices which spread beyond their ethnic originators to a wider population leads to a conclusion that Rome, up to a point, was a society that did not necessarily have a closed mind to foreign ways.⁸⁵⁵ Feldman does, however, make a telling point, when he comments that, although pagan authors ‘are divided in their approach to various other practices of the Jews, none praise circumcision’.⁸⁵⁶

7.12. Incest

Josephus’s introduction to the royal family of Adiabene is oddly frank: Izates is the offspring of a brother-sister marriage and the reader’s first view of the family is of supernatural events around the marriage bed. Sexual relations between close relatives was considered *incestus* (unclean) and a matter of *stuprum* (dishonour), punishable by law. There do not appear to be any legal cases recorded of brother-sister incest, but alleged sexual relations between father-daughter in the reign of Tiberius and aunt-nephew in the Nero’s reign were punished by death.⁸⁵⁷ Cicero famously uses the Roman antipathy to incest to blacken the character of his

⁸⁵⁵ See Goodman (1997) pp. 179-189 and Elsner & Woolf (2015) pp. 223-4.

⁸⁵⁶ Feldman (1993) p. 158.

⁸⁵⁷ Tiberius’s execution of Sextus Marius (Tac. *Ann.* 6.19, Cass. Dio 58.22.4) for incest with his daughter, and Nero’s execution of Lucius Silanus for incest with his aunt Junia Lepida (Tac. *Ann.* 16.8-9). See also *Ann.* 12.4 for an account of how Lucius Silanus’s uncle Lucius Junius Silanus Torquatus was accused by Claudius of incest with his sister Junia Calvina. Gaius *Institutes* 1.59 - 1.64 specifically sets out Roman prohibited degrees. Although this dates from the second century CE, it seems likely to reflect first century CE practice deriving from Augustus’s *Lex Julia* (see Paulus *Opinions* 2.26). See also Tacitus’s account of Agrippina’s seduction of her son Nero, such relations described as *profanus* (*Ann.* 14.2).

enemy Publius Clodius Pulcher in his speeches,⁸⁵⁸ and Kaster believes that accusations of brother-sister incest to have been a frequent late republic slur between opponents.⁸⁵⁹ Plutarch, echoing Plato, talks of incest as a vice, a concept embodying behaviour lacking in moderation, and preventing tranquillity and calm.⁸⁶⁰ Berenice, sister of Agrippa II, has already been mentioned as a prominent, albeit unpopular, oriental royal in Rome and her alleged incestuous relationship with her brother Agrippa can hardly have helped her cause.⁸⁶¹

The Romans also knew that other races allowed brother-sister and other close relative unions. To a certain extent, the accusation of barbarian incest was something of a trope. In Euripides's *Andromache*, Hermione states about barbarians 'this is the way all barbarians are. Father lies with daughter, son with mother and sister with brother'.⁸⁶² However, more specifically, Diodorus and Seneca the Younger both mention the Ptolemaic custom of brother-sister marriage in Egypt, Seneca comparing it to the licit Greek union of half-brother and sister.⁸⁶³ Strabo remarks without comment on the Hecatomnid dynasty in Caria where several brother-sister marriages occurred.⁸⁶⁴ Further East, Antiochus III of Commagene married his sister Iotapa, and their children Antiochus IV and Iotape also appear to have married.⁸⁶⁵ Herodotus mentions that Cambyses was the first Persian to marry his sister and Strabo mentions that the Zoroastrian priestly Magi slept with their mothers.⁸⁶⁶ The predilection for Parthian incest was also remarked upon by the first century CE poet Lucan:

⁸⁵⁸ See for example Cic. *Mil.* 73, *Cael.* 13.

⁸⁵⁹ Kaster (2006) pp. 409-411.

⁸⁶⁰ Plut. *Mor. Virtue and Vice* 101a-b, *Pl. Rep.* 571b-d.

⁸⁶¹ Juvenal (*Satires* 6.156-160) remarks on her notoriety for the alleged incestuous relationship. See also *AJ* 20.146.

⁸⁶² Eurip. *Andr.* 174-5.

⁸⁶³ Diod. Sic. 1.27, Seneca *Apoc.* 8. Sotades, the 3rd century BCE humourist commented adversely on the marriage between Ptolemy Philadelphus and his sister Arsinoe (Plutarch *Moralia. Education of Children* 14). See also Pausanias (2nd c. CE) who describes the union as contrary to Greek custom but acceptable to Egyptians (1.7.1).

⁸⁶⁴ Strabo *Geog.* 14.2.17, as does Arrian *Anabasis* 1.23.7.

⁸⁶⁵ From coinage where both bear the epithet Philadelphus (<http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/commagene/kings/iotape/i.html> from Mattingly (1940) accessed 9th August 2017).

⁸⁶⁶ Herodotus 3.31.1-6, Strabo *Geog.* 15.3.20. Catullus also makes reference to Parthian incest, in this case mother-son relations producing a Magi (Catull. 90). Plutarch (*Vit. Artax.* 23) tells of the third century BCE Artaxerxes

Their own sisters lie on the couches of the kings, and, for all the sanctity of the relation, their own mothers. Thebes, the city of Oedipus, is condemned in the eyes of mankind by the gloomy legend of the crime which he committed unwittingly: how often an Arsaces is born from such a union to rule the Parthians? What can I consider unpermitted to one who permits himself to beget children by his mother?⁸⁶⁷

In view of the evidence, it is unlikely that most of Josephus's readers would have warmed to this topic. Whether they would have read about it with disgust, or merely found the topic odd and foreign is difficult to say. In addition, some scholars argue that the Roman world saw royal incest differently from commoners.⁸⁶⁸ One hundred years later than Josephus, the physician and Stoic philosopher Sextus Empiricus allowed that there was no necessary natural order involved in the prohibition of certain relationships, and notes that while they may appear sinful to Romans, mother-son or brother-sister relationships may be entirely acceptable among the Magi of Persia and among Egyptians.⁸⁶⁹ Similarly, Cornelius Nepos wrote in the late first century BCE:

But such critics will for the most part be men unfamiliar with Greek letters, who will think no conduct proper which does not conform to their own habits. If these men can be made to understand that not all peoples look upon the same acts as honourable or base, but that they judge them all in the light of the usage of their forefathers, they will not be surprised that I, in giving an account of the merits of Greeks, have borne in mind the usage of that nation. For example, it was no disgrace to Cimon, an eminent citizen of Athens, to have his own sister to wife, inasmuch as his countrymen followed that same custom; but according to our standards such a union is considered impious.⁸⁷⁰

However, whether all Josephus's readers would have been so thoughtful seems doubtful.

Why then, would Josephus have included such detail, which appears to have no relevance at all to the narrative and its themes? One answer is that the material was sloppily copied from a

and his marriage to his daughter Atossa and, relating to the same period, Quintus Curtius Rufus (8.2.19) notes the incestuous marriage between Sisimithres, Governor of Sogdia, and his mother. From the first century CE, it is likely that Tigranes III/IV of Armenia married his sister Erato (see Swan (2004) p. 129 n. 116 for references to numismatic evidence) and Josephus, though not attested in any other source, mentions that the Arsacid King of Parthia, Phraataces, had sexual relations with his mother Thesmusa (AJ 18.40-42). See also Philo *De specialibus legibus* 3.3.13-16, 22-25 for a wholly negative Jewish view of such practices.

⁸⁶⁷ Lucan *De bell. civ.* 8.404-410, trans. Duff LCL 220.

⁸⁶⁸ See for example Rowlandson and Takahashi (2009) pp. 112-3.

⁸⁶⁹ *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* III 205, 234.

⁸⁷⁰ Cornelius Nepos *de Excellentibus ducibus* Preface 2-4, trans. Rolfe LCL 467.

source with little or no thought given to the content. As a more likely alternative, bearing in mind, as shown in Chapter 5, the input of Josephus to the narrative as a whole, it may be simply that Josephus aimed to attract the reader with an attention-grabbing preface. The orient was, as has been shown, a source of interesting facts and anecdotes for the first century CE Greco-Roman reader and, in addition, incest had held a certain fascination in Roman literature. Ovid tells the story in *Metamorphoses* of Myrrha who tricks her father into sleeping with her, producing a son Adonis, and in the *Heroides* he creates a letter from the legendary Canace, daughter of the wind god Aeolus, to her brother Macareus, by whom she has had a child.⁸⁷¹ Perhaps Josephus thought he was capitalising on such sentiment. If so, he presumably thought that his hero, Izates, would not lose heroic credibility by being an offspring of incestuous parents. There is some evidence that this might be so. Notwithstanding the alleged incestuous relationship between Agrippa II and his sister Berenice discussed above, they were undoubtedly seen as part of the Imperial circle and Goodman makes the point that the marriage of Antiochus IV of Commagene to his sister in the mid first century CE was no bar to their grandson Philopappus obtaining a suffect consulship in 109 CE.⁸⁷²

7.13. Summary and conclusions

It is clear that Josephus tries very hard to convince the reader of the veracity of his central themes, those of Jewish respectability and the role of the all-powerful Jewish God in the affairs of man. His narrative shows that a king who displays all the qualities of a hero is so impressed with the Jewish God that not only does he embrace all the Jewish practices, including circumcision, but he does this notwithstanding the anger of his people. In terms familiar to a Greco-Roman readership, Josephus shows that his hero possess virtue, and then illustrates

⁸⁷¹ Virgil (*Aen.* 1.71) and Martial (11.91) also allude to the story. Nero is reported by Cassius Dio as having impersonated Canace giving birth (63.10.2-3).

⁸⁷² Goodman (2012) pp. 184-5.

another historiographical theme, that of divine reward for virtue. In doing so, he uses well-known historiographical concepts, almost tropes, such as portentous dreams, reversals of fate and other Stoic ideas regarding piety and its reward to convince the reader of the quality and thus veracity of the historiography. So far, relatively straightforward.

However, Josephus has several problems. Firstly, the hero is a barbarian, and one who the more astute will recognise as no friend of Rome, if not an enemy. The starting point is that, from the analysis presented earlier in this chapter, although a conversion narrative involving a Roman may not have been quite as provocative as some might believe, Josephus plays it safe by making the hero reside outside the Roman Empire. However, this then gives Josephus other problems. Firstly, barbarians would not normally be heroic, at least in Greco-Roman eyes. Josephus deals with this by making his barbarian an illustrious one with non-barbarian personal qualities, to whom clearly the concept of *humanitas* can be applied. Josephus helps this along with his description of Helena as also having *humanitas*, through her display of euergetism. In creating this picture of Izates as the Greco-Roman ideal man, Josephus seems therefore to have deliberately skirted round the problem of Izates's physical attributes. Unlike other semi-biographical heroic portraits, we have no idea of his appearance, perhaps because to produce such a description that would be credible would detract from his other non-barbarian attributes.

Secondly, as discussed in Chapter 6, any realistic presentation of Izates's transformation to Jew would have brought out the change from polytheism to monotheism, and thus highlighted an aspect of Judaism that at least some Romans would have found offensive. Josephus is therefore deliberately vague, and talks about non-specific Jewish practices, with the notable exception of circumcision, to which we will come. However, as previously mentioned in Chapter 6, Josephus does manage to get two 'plugs' in for monotheism. Firstly in 20.48 where 'those who trust in

God *alone* do not lose the rewards of their piety’ and secondly in 20.90 where God is described as the first and *only* rightful Lord’.

Thirdly, he has to deal with the inconvenient aspect that Izates was known, at least by Tacitus, to have been on the ‘wrong’ side, as was his brother Monobazus, in Rome’s dealings with Parthia in the 50s and 60s. Josephus deals with this by fiction and silence. He creates the presumably fictitious rhetoric of a reported dialogue between Izates and Vardanes, in which Izates is an advocate of peaceful co-existence with Rome, possibly trying to evoke an image in the reader’s mind of a more eastern version of Agrippa II. He is also silent about any military activity between Parthia and Rome after 37 CE, in particular Corbulo’s campaigns in the 50s and 60s, in which Adiabene appears to have played a not insignificant part. Presumably he would have had to hope that any reference to Adiabenian support for the Jewish Revolt, detailed in the *Jewish War*, would have been forgotten by readers of both works.

This therefore seems to be a somewhat sanitised portrait. Whether his readers would have noticed this sleight of hand is open to question. The narrative flows at a pace, with plenty of exciting events along the way to keep the reader from thinking too hard about whether manipulation is going on. However, it is not entirely sanitised. The revelation that the hero is born of an incestuous union is a slightly risky strategy. Whether or not it detracted materially from the heroic portrait, it can hardly have enhanced it.

The other potentially puzzling feature is the emphasis placed on Izates’s circumcision in the narrative. Even if the Roman reaction would have been one of amusement at the foolish customs of the Jews, rather than revulsion and a consequent impact on the reader’s view of Izates as a hero, why take up such a significant part of the narrative? It could be argued that the moral of the story, God’s providence (πρόνοια) as a reward for piety, could have been demonstrated without Eleazar’s contribution, if Izates had returned from Charax already circumcised, or

simply that Izates, ‘having learned that his mother was much pleased with the Jewish religion’ (AJ 20.38), had been circumcised, with no intervening drama from Helena and Ananias, or the necessity for Eleazar’s intervention. Indeed, at one end of a spectrum, Izates could have simply adopted Jewish customs (unspecified), with no reference to circumcision.

However, whilst any of these options in respect to the construction of the narrative would have been undoubtedly possible, the story would have lost its crucial dramatic element. In particular, Josephus plays on a Greco-Roman audience’s prejudices against circumcision, to excite their curiosity. The circumcision decision therefore becomes the more extraordinary and brave. The intervention of Eleazar also allows Josephus to emphasise Izates’s piety, by pointing out the impiety of his uncircumcised state, thus making him go the full distance, in turn reinforcing the link between Izates’s Judaism and his military success with God’s help. How risky was this? Perhaps not as risky as appears at first sight. It has been put forward in Chapter 3 (pp. 62-64) that, contrary to some scholarly opinion, Josephus was not particularly shy at promoting the importance of circumcision for Jewish men throughout the *Antiquities*. Albeit that this episode focuses on circumcision in a way that is more extensive than elsewhere in the *Antiquities*, the message is essentially the same.

In summary therefore, Josephus would have hoped that this ‘case study’ of piousness and consequent triumph would have been seen by his readers as an important example of one of the fundamental propositions that run through the entire twenty books of the *Antiquities*: the all-powerful Jewish God bestows his providence upon the pious Jew; the more the piety, the more the providence. In addition, yet again, Josephus presents a Jewish hero with respectable Greco-Roman personal qualities.

Chapter 8

Summary and conclusions. The purpose of the Adiabene narrative

This thesis started by posing three questions. Firstly, what message or messages was Josephus attempting to convey in the Adiabene narrative? Secondly, how did these coincide with or conflict with his messages in the rest of the *Antiquities*? Lastly, how would his audience have reacted to reading (or possibly hearing) the Adiabene narrative? In addition, several conundrums were posed, within the context of Josephus publishing an overtly pro-Jewish text with an Easterner as hero at the end of Domitian's reign. In the first instance, there appears to be a generally held scholarly belief that Jews suffered, both politically and socially, during the Flavian Principates, particularly Domitian's, as a result of their rebellion in 66 to 70 CE. How effective could Josephus have been in that environment in promoting a Jew as a hero and the Jewish God as supreme? Given that to have been a Jew appears to have been someone who was at best despised and at worst persecuted, how dangerous would it therefore have been to have published such a work under an emperor who seems to have punished those who wrote in a way that conflicted with the imperial message? Lastly, how effective would it have been in convincing an audience of the merits of Jews and Judaism to have created a Jewish hero who was also a Parthian, and therefore a member of another apparently despised race?

After setting the scene in *Chapter 1. Introduction*, *Chapter 2. Outline of the Adiabene narrative* gives a precis of the narrative (pp. 9-13), and then examines the structure and form of the text, both from its apparent subject order and from the phrases and grammar used by Josephus (pp. 14-16). It is clear that, with one major exception, the narrative is a relatively straightforward chronological text, albeit infused with dramatic artifice, classic Josephan 'sloppiness' and specific theological messages (pp. 16-21), these messages to be explored in Chapter 5. The one exception is the so-called conversion text, which uses analepsis interposed into the chronology

to combine a series of conversion episodes of the principal protagonists, Izates and Helena (pp. 25-28). The conversion narrative also reveals factual inconsistencies which may point to multiple sources, albeit it is impossible to do other than speculate as to from where any of Josephus's material was derived (pp. 29-30). Although the form of the narrative has in some parts the appearance of an ancient biography, the conclusion is that, in reality, the lack of personal detail, compared with other ancient biographies, would lead one to believe that the hero is the medium for the message, rather than an interesting character to be studied in his own right.

Chapter 3. The literary context of the Adiabene narrative: The nature, purpose and messages of the Antiquities shows that Josephus appears to have a very specific and coherent agenda throughout the *Antiquities* to reclaim a respectability for Jews and the Jewish God within the Roman Empire which he feels has been diminished in recent times (pp. 38-42). When the rather grandiose historiographical tropes of providing benefit to mankind through the provision of knowledge are laid aside, it is clear that Josephus is attempting to rebut the charges against the Jews of misanthropy, troublemaking, disloyalty and insignificance, originally laid against them in the Greek speaking world but presumably increasingly prevalent in Rome (pp. 42-53), as well as trying to show that the Jewish God is still a force to be reckoned with, notwithstanding the Jews' defeat in 70 CE and the destruction of the Temple (pp. 55-59). The key message is that piety brings reward from the Jewish God, both in terms of a blessed life but also protection from danger.

In addition, Chapter 3 examines Josephus's discernible attitude within the *Antiquities* as a whole to conversion and circumcision (pp. 60-64), two key features of the Adiabene narrative. It concludes that Josephus is neither particularly shy of mentioning conversion within the

entirety of the *Antiquities* nor of promoting circumcision as a key tenet of a Jewish way of life for males.

Chapter 4. The historiographical and historical context of the Adiabene narrative focuses on five topics that provide the background to this thesis: Josephus's literary tradition and audience (pp. 71-82), his potential circle of literary distribution (pp. 82-90), the political and social position of the Jews under the Flavians, particularly Domitian (pp. 90-103), the freedom of literary expression under Domitian particularly to write about topics that may have conflicted with imperial sentiment (pp. 103-110), and the Roman view of Parthia and Parthians in the latter half of the first century CE (pp. 110-121).

The chapter concludes that, albeit there were precedents for Jews writing in Greek for a Hellenistic Jewish audience, Josephus's style seems to have been very firmly rooted in Greco-Roman historiography and most naturally addressed to a Greco-Roman audience (pp. 75-81). In addition, the chapter then shows that, in spite of Josephus's articulated hopes to reach a wide audience for the *Antiquities*, the admittedly rather scanty evidence seems to point to a narrower likely audience of middle-eastern emigres within Rome, and possibly Jewish Diasporan communities (pp. 89-90). The conclusion to be drawn from the literary and archaeological evidence in relation to the status of Jews in late first century CE Rome is that their lot appears to have worsened under the Flavians, both politically and probably socially (pp. 101-103). This seems to have occurred through Flavian political use of Judaea's defeat and, particularly in Domitian's time, the very rigorous and public imposition of the *Fiscus Judaicus*. In addition, as discussed in Chapter 5, Josephus's own works provide compelling evidence of his own dissatisfaction with the status of Jews. However, the evidence for any restrictions in Domitian's era on Jews following their ancestral practices seems slight.

The evidence for a reign of literary terror is also tenuous. The *damnatio memoriae* clearly influenced those who wrote, or at least published, after his death to claim that free speech was impossible and that literary production that did not flatter the emperor was dangerous (p. 104). There are many examples of aristocrats who produced literary works being executed, but it seems more likely that their demise arose out of their potential threat to Domitian rather than the nature of their literary output (pp. 104-5). A considerable body of literature was produced in his reign, not all of it flattering to Domitian, and providing that an author was neither an aristocratic potential rival nor disrespectful of the *imperator*, that author was probably safe enough (p. 109). Lastly, the Roman view of the Parthian was a curious blend of disgust and reluctant admiration. Inherited from the Greeks, a perception of inherent genetic feebleness and fixation on luxury and vice sat rather badly with the lessons of recent history. Unlike other nations, the Parthians had consistently outfought the Romans on the battlefield and matched them diplomatically, thus rather puncturing the Roman self-view of superiority (p. 121).

Chapter 5. The Adiabene narrative within the context of the Antiquities shows that the Adiabene narrative is central to Josephus's messages in the rest of the *Antiquities*. In particular, irrespective of from where Josephus draw the material, the evidence clearly shows his authorial touch throughout the story. Izates is shown to be a hero from much the same mould as the biblical ones, fulfilling the same purpose as them in showing that Jews have the same admirable qualities as Greek and Roman heroes (pp. 123-129). In turn, Izates experiences the same rewards from God as biblical leaders for his piety, thus yet again demonstrating both the Jewish God's providence but also his invincibility (pp. 129-132). Chapter 5 also shows that Josephus had to craft his narrative carefully so as to avoid inconvenient historical facts that would point to Adiabene as no friend of Rome (pp. 133-134). Other links with the rest of the *Antiquities* are shown, notably the recurring theme of fraternal jealousy, Josephus's tendency to moralise, the theme of reversals of Fortune, and Jewish loyalty (pp. 134-140), all of which convey to the

reader the sense that the narrative is specifically designed to complement Josephus's principal purposes. In particular, the moralising in the Adiabene narrative should be seen as a bookend with the Proem, a summing up of Josephus's dominant theme.

There are however differences, notably Josephus's apparent approval of the incestuous union between brother and sister (pp. 140-142). In addition, the role of God in terms of direct relationship with Izates and subsequent direct intervention in the narrative could hardly be more explicit, in contrast to the at times de-theologised portrait elsewhere presented and Josephus's occasional flirting with a universalistic picture of the Deity (pp. 144-148).

Chapter 6. Conversion in the Adiabene narrative looks in considerable detail at the language used by Josephus and the inherent logic in the apparent meaning of the text to determine the religious status of Izates and Helena at each stage in the conversion part of the narrative and, in particular, to answer the question whether Izates was considered by Josephus to be a Jew before his circumcision. The conclusion arrived at, contrary to nearly all scholarly opinion, is that he was indeed considered by Josephus to be Jewish following his introduction to Jewish practices in Charax (pp. 188-190). In particular, Josephus's use of τὸν θεὸν/τὸ θεῖον σέβειν to describe activities in Charax does not indicate adherence (pp. 161-169) and Josephus's use of εἰς ἐκεῖνα [ἔθῃ] μεταθέσθαι⁸⁷³ to describe Izates's state of mind once king does not indicate the point at which he became a Jew, but is more likely to indicate a change of mind about the need to be circumcised in order to be a truly pious Jewish man, and thus reap the God-sent rewards of his piety (pp. 171-174).

Chapter 7. The Adiabene narrative in Domitianic Rome analyses the possible effect of reading the narrative on the Greco-Roman reader to whom Josephus claims he is reaching out. Building on the analysis in Chapter 4, the chapter shows that a Parthian, providing that he displayed the

⁸⁷³ AJ 20.38.

noble qualities demanded of Greek and Roman men, particularly bravery, and providing that he was of royal lineage, could indeed serve as a hero in the narrative (pp. 193-203). Other aspects of the narrative, such as Helena's euergetism (pp. 205-207), dreams (pp. 207-210) and the role of God and Fate and reversals of Fortune (pp. 210-215) would have been familiar to a first century reader of Greco-Roman historiography. Contrary to some scholarly opinion, it would appear that the mere fact of Jewish conversion would not necessarily turn a Greco-Roman reader to rejecting the narrative and its message (pp. 216-218). It could however be argued that, at times, the dramatic tension gets overplayed, such as Josephus's use of incest and the length of the circumcision narrative, which may have negated some of his historiographical efforts to persuade. The effect on the reader of having to digest a long drawn-out narrative on the merits or otherwise of circumcision for Izates, while not necessarily evoking disgust, is unlikely to have evoked approbation, and the message that the hero was born out of an incestuous union would have been similarly frowned upon (pp. 218-225).

Indeed, it may be the case that a fine line was drawn by Josephus. In addition to flirting with Roman disapproval in order to make the narrative more interesting, to have presented the conversion as happening to a prominent Roman citizen (assuming such an example could have been found from the recent past) would have potentially been playing with fire. It would have been one thing to cast the hero as someone who posed no threat to the traditional pantheon of Roman worship, but quite another to present a Roman aristocrat as one of those who appeared to be ἐξ τὰ τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἥθη ἐξοκέλλοντες,⁸⁷⁴ or even further to have converted and become a Jew. Even if we do not really know who these people 'drifting into Jewish customs' were and what they were doing, the message is clear. Far safer to present a quasi-Parthian than a Roman aristocrat as gaining the benefits of God's *pronoia*.

⁸⁷⁴ Cass. Dio 67.14.1-3.

In summary therefore, it is readily apparent that the text is one that, from wherever it was inherited, has Josephus's signature on it, and is by no means a filler snatched from others' works to pad out the final book of the *Antiquities*. The message of the text is entirely coincident with the messages throughout the *Antiquities*, and the portrait of Izates resembles closely, in its exposition of his heroic attributes, the portraits of Jewish biblical heroes. The text shows clear evidence of structuring, in manipulation of the historical background, by showing typically Josephan support for Rome, and in the manufacture of patently artificial scenes, such as Izates's and Artabanus's meeting and the circumcision hysteria in the palace, either to elaborate on Josephus's message or to create dramatic tension. In the last analysis, the Adiabene narrative forms a coda with the Proem and is a striking example of the proposition that 'men who conform to the will of God, and do not venture to transgress laws that have been excellently laid down, prosper in all things beyond belief'.⁸⁷⁵ If a high ranking non-Jew can be seen to have accepted this message, surely, for Josephus, this was a triumphal demonstration of 'case proved'.

⁸⁷⁵ *AJ* 1.14.

Bibliography

Primary sources – the Adiabene text

The text used for this thesis is the Loeb Classical Library (LCL) edition of Josephus's Book 20, based on the *editio maior* of Niese published between 1885 and 1895, with a small number of amendments by the editor Louis Feldman.⁸⁷⁶ None of the potential alternative readings shown would appear to have any material bearing on the conclusions in this thesis.

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All primary source texts are as published by the Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA unless otherwise indicated. All references to LCL page numbers are to the on-line edition, unless otherwise indicated.

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