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4. Izates as a Jew

4.1. Introduction

Since we already know a lot about the message of Ant. 20:17-96 implied through its form as a biography, it is high time to deal with the topic that Josephus places as the narrative climax – the conversion story (Ant. 20:34-48).

4.2. Observations on Recent Scholarship

Before we set out to analyze the conversion story, we want to take a look at recent scholarship on our text. Four main trends can be observed in recent scholarship on Ant. 20:34-48.

First, for a long time the classic approach was to see Ant. 20:34-48 as a story about Izates' progression from a non-Jew first to a God-fearer and then to a Jew through circumcision³²⁷. Thus, as a God-fearer Izates adopted some, but not all, Jewish practices and ideas³²⁸. Only through circumcision did he become Jewish. This long-lasting consensus has been challenged by G. Gilbert who suggested that Izates was considered by himself, Ananias, and perhaps also Eleazar, as a Jew even before circumcision (although perhaps not by Josephus)³²⁹. In this way, Gilbert broke away from perceiving Izates as somewhat midway between Gentile and Jewish before his circumcision³³⁰.

Another trend in the interpretation of Ant. 20:34-48 was to see the dispute between Ananias and Eleazar as mirroring the controversy among the 1st c. CE Jewish traditions about the necessity of circumcision for conversion³³¹. Accordingly, commentators have tended to find parallels for such a discussion in the controversy between the schools of Hillel and Shammai in the Talmud (*BT Yebamot* 46a), as well as in the New Testament between Paul and Barnabas, on the one hand, and James and Peter, on the other. The idea underlying this interpretation is that there were at least some Jewish traditions that acknowledged Jewishness without circumcision. Of course, scholars are divided on this matter, and while it seems that most scholars do not agree with this idea³³², there are always some who sustain a claim that for some Jews circumcision was not the sine qua non condition for being/becoming Jewish³³³.

A slightly modified version of the discussion mentioned above touches on the question of Jewish particularism or universalism towards non-Jews. If we rule out the possibility that Ananias

³²⁷ Lake 1933: 74-96; Feldman 1950: 200-208; Marcus 1952: 247-250; Kuhn/Stegeman 1962: 1248-1283; Siegert 1973: 109-164; Kraabel 1981: 113-126; MacLennan/Kraabel 1986: 46-53; Feldman 1986: 58-63; Feldman 1989: 265-305; Feldman 1993: 162-169; Wander 1994; Wander 1998; Koch 2006: 62-90.

³²⁸ Schürer 1909: 172-181; Vermes/Millar/Goodman 1986: 165-168, Kuhn/Stegemann 1962: 1260-1261; Kasting 1969: 25; Siegert 1973: 128-129.

³²⁹ Gilbert 1990/1991.

³³⁰ D.R.Schwartz 1996: 266-267 has suggested that S.J.D. Cohen 1987 also attacked the status quo but from a completely opposing direction than Gilbert 1990/1991, namely he was to point out that Izates, in Josephus' eyes, was a non-Jew and observed no Jewish practises whatsoever prior to his circumcision. Thus, we would have a sharp alternative – prior to his circumcision Izates was either a non-Jew (Cohen) or a Jew (Gilbert) in contrast to what has been believed so far. However, this author does not find such strong statements in Cohen's paper. Cohen rather names Izates' status before his circumcision as "adherence to Judaism" that is explained as "having one foot on each side of a fence which was cultural and not creedal" (Nock 1933: 6, whose word S.J.D. Cohen 1987 quotes and refers to his description of the status of "adherence to Judaism") what seems to be just an equivalent of the previous name - a God-fearer.

³³¹ Klausner 1944: 38-40; McEleney 1974: 323-324; Collins 1985:179 (who leaves the question open); Gilbert 1990/1991: 229-313; McKnight 1991: 80; Borgen 1996: 53; R. Goldenberg 1998: 60.

³³² Bamberger 1939: 49-51; Nolland 1981: 192-194; Schiffman 1987: 302-306; Feldman 1965: 22-23, n. "a"; D.R. Schwartz 1996: 263-282; D.R. Schwartz 2007b: 93-109.

³³³ Klausner 1944: 38-40; McEleney 1974: 323-324; R.G. Hall 1988: 79; Gilbert 1990/1991: 299-313; McKnight 1991: 80; Borgen 1996: 53; R. Goldenberg 1998: 60.

suggested to Izates that one could be Jewish and uncircumcised at the same time, what other option remained for Izates if he was to remain uncircumcised? As Ananias put it - Izates could “worship the Deity” (τὸ θεῖον σέβειν). But if Izates was to remain uncircumcised and “worship the Deity”, what did the last phrase actually mean? What was the answer given by Jews to those non-Jews who did not wish to convert to Jewish traditions? This issue has been raised by a few scholars, most recently by D.R. Schwartz³³⁴, who points out that according to Ananias, although conversion is preferable, Gentiles who do not convert, can still worship God in a manner pleasing to Him, because the Jewish tradition, though being a preferable medium between the human race and God, is not the only medium that enables mankind to contact the Divine. In contrast, Eleazar did not distinguish between the Jewish God and the Divine and consequently thought that Jewish traditions are for all, therefore, he considered those, even non-Jews, who failed to follow God’s law, as revealed through Moses, to be sinners against God. Consequently, he urged Izates to become a Jew by circumcision.

The fourth mainstream approach lies in exploring the role played by Ananias and Eleazar as Jewish teachers. Was their engagement in Izates’ conversion occasional or did they act as trained teachers who were consciously treating their own activity as *mission*? If so, was *Judaism* then a missionary religion? These questions have been posed by many scholars, and while it seems that most find enough evidence to support the claim that there was a lot of Jewish missionary activity in the Second Temple Period³³⁵, we also have very influential critics of this idea³³⁶.

Some of the above-mentioned issues clearly had their own historical and ideological limitations. Namely, the first issue was explored in the context of the discussion over the existence of an ancient group of God-fearers and Ant. 20:34-48, as such, was to corroborate (or less often to deny) Izates’ religious status as a God-fearer prior to his circumcision. Consequently, the history of interpretation of Ant. 20:34-48 mirrored all the main stages of the discussion on God-fearers – from their “omni-presence” through “the disappearance” until a more balanced re-evaluation of the evidence in the light of the inscription from Aphrodisias (which, next to *Acts*, is the most prominent example quoted to support the existence of a distinct group of God-fearers, since it contains more than fifty names of people called θεοσεβείς, inscribed on two sides of a block of marble)³³⁷. Very similarly, the fourth issue aimed to answer the question whether Ananias and Eleazar were valuable examples that could finally give solution to an old question – do we know any Jewish professional missionaries from ancient texts and consequently can we say that at least some Jewish traditions had missionary leanings? Both approaches had one feature very much in common – they treated Ant. 20:17-96 as a repository of historical information of particular kinds. In contrast, our goal is, first of all, to understand Ant. 20:17-96 as Josephus’ literary work with its own rhetorical and ideological purposes. Thus, while Josephus’ contribution may be of help for modern historians to decide whether or not a well-defined and publicly recognized group of God-fearers was in existence in 1st. c. CE and whether or not there was Jewish mission towards the outside world, this was not the primary purpose Josephus wanted to communicate through the text.

³³⁴ D.R. Schwartz 1996: 263-282.

³³⁵ Harnack 1924; Moore 1927; Bamberger 1939: 3-27, 225; Feldman 1992a: 372-407; Blaschke 1998: 234; Dickson 2003: 11-50.

³³⁶ McKnight 1991: 44-47, Will/Orrieux 1993: 101-137 and especially Goodman 1989a: 175-185; Goodman 1992: 53-78; Goodman 1994: 60-90.

³³⁷ Lake 1933: 74-96; Feldman 1950: 200-208; Marcus 1952: 247-250; Kuhn/Stegemann 1962: 1248-1283; Siegert 1973: 109-164; Kraabel 1981: 113-126, and after the discoveries in Aphrodisias: MacLennan/Kraabel 1986: 46-53; Feldman 1986: 58-63; Feldman 1989: 265-305; Feldman 1993: 162-169; Wander 1994; Wander 1998; Koch 2006: 62-90. On the dating of the Aphrodisias inscription: Reynolds/Tannenbaum 1987 (editio princeps) and those who distinguish two independent parts of the inscription dated to the 4th and 5th c. CE. - Botermann 1993: 184-194; Bonz 1994: 281-299; Chaniotis 2002: 209-242; Ameling 2004: no. 14, 71-112. On other inscriptional material parallel to Aphrodisias and to the God-fearers-discussion, see a good overview in Levinskaya 1996: 51-82.

In contrast, the questions of how Josephus understands conversion, what it means to be Jewish and what stand should Jews take towards non-Jews (and vice versa) belong to the core of Josephus' message in *Antiquities Judaicae* as we can judge it from Josephus' preface, as well as by taking into account his intended audience. All in all, our aim is first to perform an exegesis of the text and next to answer two basic questions, of course, alongside related issues:

- 1 – how does Josephus understand conversion to the Jewish traditions?
- 2 – how does this understanding of conversion relate to the relations between Jews and non-Jews to whom Josephus addresses his *Antiquitates Judaicae*?

4.3. Exegesis of the Text

4.3.1. Josephus' Understanding of Conversion

The opening of the Adiabene passage 20:17 subsumes the whole passage 20:17-96 under the topic of the conversion of Helena and Izates. This shows us the importance of this topic for Josephus' agenda in writing Ant. 20:17-96. Already in the first verse the idea of conversion is conveyed by the phrase εἰς τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθη τὸν βίον μετέβαλον. This leads us to a crucial point on the importance of terms used. First, scholars tend to use *etic* terms to describe what Josephus expressed in Greek. This is of course justified in scholarship as long as it does not obscure the author's thought. Thus, it is without doubt that what Josephus announces in Ant. 20:17 as the main topic of the whole account (20:17-96) and describes in detail in Ant. 20:34-48 and can be categorized as “conversion”, that is, “crossing the cultural boundary”³³⁸ that involves “the reorientation of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning from indifference or from an earlier form of piety to another, a turning that implies consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right”³³⁹. Nevertheless, for the sake of understanding our text we shall first give voice to Josephus himself and the terminology he himself uses before we put modern theological and sociological categories on his own words. In practice, Josephus' phrase in Ant. 20:17 can be literally rendered into English as “a change of life to the customs of the Jews”. How can we understand this phrase in Josephus remains to be seen.

The verb μεταβάλλω translates as “to change, to turn about” and can refer to any change, also of a trivial character like a change of clothes or diet³⁴⁰. For example, in Herodotus, the phrase μεταβάλλω ὕδατα means to “drink different water”, while in Xenophon the verb μεταβάλλω in the medium form plus the noun ἱμάτια as an object simply refers to a change of one's clothes. However, it can also mean “to change political sides”, “change one's mind”³⁴¹. For example, μεταβάλλω is used in Acts 28:6 to describe a change in the opinion of the native people of Melita about Paul after they saw that the viper did not harm him even though it had fastened on his hand. Thus, Paul turned in their eyes from a murder chased by god's revenge into a divine figure – “they changed their minds, and said that he was a god” (μεταβαλόμενοι ἔλεγον αὐτὸν εἶναι θεόν). This is, we must say, a very striking example of a deep change in one's opinion from one extreme to another. Further, in *Hist.* 8.109 Herodotus uses μεταβάλλω to describe Themistocles' political switch that enabled the Persians to return home after the battle at Salamis without the Greek pursuit. Themistocles first wanted to encourage the Hellenes to chase after the Persian fleet, but when his advice was partly dismissed, he entirely changed his course to the contrary by suggesting no chase whatsoever, and when he succeeded in persuading the Athenians to give up any plans of hunt, he let the Persians know about his contribution so as to win their gratitude. What Themistocles did in Hdt. *Hist.* VIII, 109 was on the verge of treason but was not exceptional for

³³⁸ S.J.D. Cohen 1987: 6.

³³⁹ Nock 1933: 7.

³⁴⁰ Liddell/Scott/Jones 1986: 1109-1110.

³⁴¹ Liddell/Scott/Jones 1986: 1109-1110.

the Greek political scene of those days. The Greek language even coined a fitting expression for those who aligned themselves with the Persians – μηδίζειν and/or μηδισμός (e.g. Hdt. *Hist.* 4.144, 165; 7.138-139, 205, 233; 8.30-134; Thucydides 1.95.5; 3.62.1, 63.1; Isocrates, *Pan.* 157; Demosthenes, *Arist.* 205)³⁴². These expressions belong to a larger subgroup of verbs and nouns derived from ethnic roots, especially: already mentioned μηδίζω / Μηδισμός; as well as other early examples: περσίζω / Περσισμός; λακονίζω / Λακωνισμός; ἄττικίζω / Ἀττικισμός³⁴³. Likewise, there are also two other expressions that belong to this group and frequently appear in the Jewish-Hellenistic context: ἰουδαίζω / Ἰουδαϊσμός (esp. Bell. 2:454, Bell. 2:462-463) and ἑλληνίζω / Ἑλληνισμός. All these examples of the –ίζω verbs basically mean the “going over to, adopting of, or aligning with” a people or culture other than one’s own³⁴⁴.

Thus, as we can see the verb μεταβάλλω conveys the idea of change, how deep and profound such a change is, depends on the context. Consequently, the verb μεταβάλλω is not automatically a technical term for “crossing a cultural boundary” but in a certain context it well fits the meaning of a profound change that involved “the reorientation of the soul of an individual, his deliberate turning” from one position in his life to another. This meaning of μεταβάλλω is clearly implied in Ant. 20:17 since the change is referred to the life of Helena and Izates. They are in fact said to change “the course of life, the manner of living” (βίος). Further, this change of the course of life is attributed to τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθη. Liddell-Scott-Jones translates ἔθη as simply “customs, habits”, but there is much more meaning in the word ἔθη in general and in Josephus particularly than just that of customary manner of behavior. This term in fact belongs to a range of Greek ethnographical conceptions³⁴⁵. Namely, the Greeks were aware that different parts of the earth are inhabited by various groups and, despite some variations and ambiguities of usage, they called them ἔθνη³⁴⁶. This term often translates as peoples or nations³⁴⁷ (the latter being less suitable because of its nineteenth-century connotations) and is used for groups of different constituency, history, and size, such as Athenians, Spartans, Medians, Libyans or Indians³⁴⁸. Nevertheless, ἔθνος always conveys an idea of a ethno-cultural entity, and each of these entities “had its distinctive nature or character (φύσις, ἔθος) expressed in unique ancestral traditions (τὰ πάτρια), which typically reflected a shared (even if fictive) ancestry (συγγενεία); each had its charter stories (μύθοι), customs, norms, conventions, mores, laws (νόμοι, ἔθη, νόμιμα), and political arrangements or constitution (πολιτεία)”³⁴⁹. Accordingly, in his famous passage on Syria (*Geo.* 16.2.2) Strabo mentions Jews as one of many ἔθνη living there, alongside such as Syrians, Phoenicians, Idumaeans, Gazaeans, Azotians. So does Philo in many places refer to the Jews as members of an ἔθνος (*Mos.* 1.7, 34; *Dec.* 97; *Spec.* 2.163, 166; 4.179, 224; *Virt.* 212, 226), whose constitution

³⁴² Mason 2007: 463-464.

³⁴³ Mason 2007: 463-464.

³⁴⁴ Mason 2007: 462. For a discussion on the usage of both terms in the Jewish context, see S.J.D. Cohen 1999: 109-139, Mason 2007: 460-480 and Donaldson 2007: 292-293. As for our own stand, the following has to be stated. First, both verbs indicate what someone does in terms of culture and consequently its cognate noun does not express a coherent system of practices and beliefs (like modern –ism nouns). Secondly, the distinction between “Judaizing” as either a political allegiance or a cultural standing is artificial since Jews constituted “a social entity was as much cultural as religious as it was political” (Donaldson 2007: 294). Thirdly, without any claim to address the issue in its full complexity – the term Hellenism does not necessarily have to be seen as stripped from any ethnic connotations from the Hellenistic period on. For instance, in the second Sophistic terminology (1-3 c. CE) there are still some ethnic connotations in it – see Mason 2007: 495; Bowie 1970: 3-41.

³⁴⁵ For Greek ethnographical ideas, see C.P. Jones 1996: 315-320; Konstan 1997: 97-110; J.M. Hall 2002: 1-29; Konstan 2001: 29-50; Said 2001: 275-299; Gruen 2001: 347-373; Fraser 2009: 1-11.

³⁴⁶ Mason 2007: 491; Fraser 2009: 1-11.

³⁴⁷ Liddell/Scott/Jones 1986: 490; see also Gruen 2001: 347-373 who uses interchangeably *peoples* and, in most cases, *nations* where *ethne* seems to be the Greek equivalent.

³⁴⁸ C.P. Jones 1996: 315-320; Mason 2007: 491.

³⁴⁹ Mason 2007: 484. Likewise Said 2001: 275-279.

(*Mos.* 1.1; *Prob.* 43, 57, 68) has been established by their lawgiver Moses (*Virt.* 108)³⁵⁰. In a famous passage in *Virt.* 102-103 taken by scholars as an example of Philo's account on conversion, Philo's language is full of ethnic associations³⁵¹. Those who decide to join the Jews have to break away from their blood-relatives, ancestral home, customs, and sacred rites. Here what we call conversion is perceived as a move from one ἔθνος to another, this time to the Jewish ἔθνος whose distinctive laws are given by their lawgiver Moses.

Philo's text makes us aware of another characteristic of such a notion of crossing the cultural boundary – if someone joins one ἔθνος, he leaves the other one behind. This breaking motif is indeed present in the Adiabene narrative when Izates' subjects despise him for leaving their own ancestral customs in particular (*Ant.* 20:75.77.81). The description of the spread of Jewish customs (regarded as alien to what appears to be 'indigenous') is a common place in ancient literature that refers to non-Jews approaching Jews and their traditions. Especially some Roman sources (Seneca, *Epistulae Morales*, 108.22; Juvenal, *Satirae*, 14.96-106; Tacitus, *Historiae*, 5.5.1-2) complain about the spread of Jewish customs whose absorption makes Romans alien to their own culture and even despise it. For instance, Tacitus (*Hist.* 5.5.1) remarks that such people "separate themselves from their ancestral rites" ("spretis religionibus patriis"), while Juvenal (*Sat.* 14.100) goes so far that he states that they "are used to despise the laws of Rome" ("Romanas autem soliti contemnere leges"). What is more, it is not only non-Jewish sources that point to the social separation between both worlds, but this separation is presented as a positive norm in *Joseph and Aseneth*³⁵². Joseph cannot give a sisterly kiss to Aseneth nor eat with her as long as she remains a worshipper of idols; in turn, Aseneth's crossing over to the Jewish side (including the rejection of Egyptian deities) bring social and family ostracism upon her to such an extent that she is afraid of being renounced by her parents as their daughter (*Jos. Asen.* 12:12-13). Thus, the move from one ἔθνος to the other means not only the adoption of new ties, but rejection and breaking away from one's previous background.

Returning to Josephus, let us remark that he does not speak of Izates' and Helena's change of life into *Judaism* nor *the Jewish religion* but says that they embraced ἔθη typical of the Jews as of one of many ἔθνη of the inhabited world. Both terms are indeed not incidental in Josephus' *Ant.*, as well as in his other writings. In his *Ant.*, he consciously undertakes to explain the Jewish origin, history and constitution to the Greeks. As for Josephus' description of the constitution, he delivers it in many places of his narrative. Of course, in practice each πολιτεία consisted of many laws and customs that together make up the political arrangement of government. Josephus describes them using interchangeably four terms: νόμοι, ἔθη, πάτρια, νόμιμα or their combinations like πάτρια ἔθη³⁵³. Νόμος and ἔθος are used most often. Ἔθος shows up seventy-six times in *Ant.*, while twenty-five appearances refer to customs of different peoples (like ἔθη and νόμιμα of the Egyptians in *Ant.* 1:116) or banal habits (like Herod's habit of peeling off a fruit skin before eating it in *Ant.* 17:183), fifty-one cases clearly refer to customs that constitute the essence of the Jewish ἔθνος (e.g. *Ant.* 3:217, 5:101, 12:97, 13:397, 14:194, 15:254, 16:42, 19:383)³⁵⁴. Thus, when Josephus writes of what we are used to call conversion, he, at least in *Ant.* 20:17, paints a picture of a fundamental change of life that lies in adopting ancestral customs of an ἔθνος one has decided to join and breaking away from one's past ties.

The same kind of language describing conversion can be found in other passages of Josephus' *Ant.* where he speaks of whole groups of ancient peoples that were brought over to

³⁵⁰ Mason 2007: 490-491.

³⁵¹ Mason 2007: 494.

³⁵² See Chesnutt 1995: 97-117; Tromp 1999: 266-271; Zangenberg 2009: 159-186.

³⁵³ Schröder 1996: 122-123; Mason 2007: 491-494.

³⁵⁴ For a full list, see Schröder 1996: 122-123.

Jewish laws and customs³⁵⁵. By way of illustration, when Alexander Janneus conquered neighboring territories east of the Jordan, the cities were destroyed and their inhabitants were expelled because they rejected an offer allowing them to stay if they would “be brought over to ancestral laws of the Jews” (εἰς πάτρια τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθη μεταβαλεῖσθαι) – Ant. 13:397. Other references to the policy of the Hasmoneans who conquered neighboring areas and forced their inhabitants either to be circumcised or to leave their homeland refer to the adoption of Jewish laws and customs that are termed νόμοι, ἔθη or πάτρια. According to Ant. 13:257, the citizens of Idumea are allowed to stay in their country “provided that they submit to circumcision and use the laws of the Jews” (εἰ περιτέμνονται τὰ αἰδοῖα καὶ τοῖς Ἰουδαίων νόμοις χρήσασθαι θέλοιν). Thus, we have here a link between circumcision and adopting (using) Jewish laws (τοῖς Ἰουδαίων νόμοις χρᾶσθαι). In Ant. 15:254 the Idumeans’ conversion is referred to once again and is said to lie in “changing into Jewish customs and laws” (εἰς τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθη καὶ νόμιμα μεθίστημι). Further, according to Ant. 13:318-319, Aristobulos forced the citizens of Iturea “to be circumcised and live according to Jewish laws (περιτέμνεσθαι καὶ κατὰ τοὺς Ἰουδαίων νόμους ζῆν). All these references (Ant. 13:397; Ant. 13:257; Ant. 15:254; Ant. 13:318-319) are made about groups of peoples, in fact other ἔθνη that joined the Jewish ἔθνος. All four texts describe the conversion as “adoption of laws and/or customs” of the Jews. Two texts (Ant. 13:257, Ant. 13:318-319) mention both the adoption (use) of Jewish laws/customs and circumcision at the same time. Neither speaks only of circumcision. Therefore, at least on the basis of the texts mentioned above (Ant. 13:397; Ant. 13:257; Ant. 15:254; Ant. 13:318-319) that refer to whole groups of ancient peoples, we can say that the role of the adoption of customs/laws of the Jewish ἔθνος comes to the fore first and joining the Jews as such primarily lies in the adoption of νόμοι, ἔθη or πάτρια, that is, distinctive laws and customs of the Jewish ἔθνος. Circumcision is without doubt an indispensable part of conversion, but conversion as such, is a much broader phenomenon than merely the rite of circumcision³⁵⁶.

Other references to undisputable examples of “crossings the boundary and becoming a Jew” mentioned in Josephus’ Ant. encompass cases of individuals approaching Jews and their traditions. In Ant. 18:82 the Roman patron Fulvia is said to “enter (come over to) Jewish laws” (νομίμοις προσεληλυθυῖαν τοῖς Ἰουδαϊκοῖς)³⁵⁷. Azizus king of Emesa (Ant. 20:139.142-143) and Polemo king of Cilicia (Ant. 20:145-146) were both required to “be circumcised” (περιτέμνεσθαι) in order to marry Jewish women, Drusilla and Bernice respectively. In Ant. 16:225 and Ant. 20:139, Josephus recalls two other weddings between non-Jewish kings and Jewish princess that were cancelled because the grooms, Syllaeus the Nabatean and Epiphanes son of the king of Commagene respectively, refused to “be enrolled in the Jewish laws” (ἐγγραφῆναι τοῖς τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθεσι with regard to Syllaeus) or “to come over to Jewish laws” (τὰ Ἰουδαίων ἔθη μεταλαβεῖν as for Epiphanes).

All these references are crucial for the understanding of Ant. 20:34-48 because first they refer to individuals, secondly, all candidates but Fulvia are of royal blood and in fact belong to client royalty under Roman rule. Thirdly, while Fulvia’s situation as a woman married to a Roman man belonging to elites of Rome’s imperial society can be equivalent to Helena to some extent,

³⁵⁵ For the historical context of the Hasmonean policy of Judaizing the neighboring territories, see Dąbrowa 2010a: 753-78, 84-85; Dąbrowa 2010b: 7-14. By contrast, many scholars perceive this policy, and conversions resulting from it, as a matter of either joining them to a political commonwealth or spreading Judaism as a comprehensive system of beliefs and thoughts (stripped from ethnic connotations). See e.g. S.J.D. Cohen 2000: 109-129 and D.R. Schwartz 1992: 5-15.

³⁵⁶ Likewise S.J.D. Cohen 1987: 421. To be more specific, in this context circumcision is implied in the adoption of Jewish laws and customs.

³⁵⁷ In contrast to S.J.D. Cohen 1987: 424 we must remark that Josephus’ negative tones do not refer to Fulvia’s attachment to Jewish customs itself, but to how two Jewish crooks took advantage of her naïve piety. What Cohen claims is, in fact, the assumption that the unfortunate outcome of the story casts doubt on the very fact of Fulvia’s interest in Jewish traditions.

Azizus, Polemo, Syllaeus and Epiphanes were all of royal stock and while not being Jews by birth, joined the Jewish ἔθνος or at least considered joining it for some reasons. Thus, their situation is very comparable to that of Izates.

Let us first see what terminology Josephus uses for his description of these royal conversions to Jewish traditions. Twice the text simply states that non-Jewish candidates for husbands of Jewish princess were required to “be circumcised” (Azizus in Ant. 20:143; Polemo in Ant. 20:145-146). The texts are not concerned about any ethical or religious matters; instead, the motivation for the circumcision is only for the sake of marriage. Further, what additionally persuaded Polemo to the marriage with Berenice was her wealth. Thus, the conversion was only a prerequisite for marital and (consequently) royal and/or financial purposes. In the case of Syllaeus and Epiphanes, they too wanted to marry Jewish royal princesses. While Syllaeus’ motivation is said to have resulted from passion, we do not hear anything precise of Epiphanes’ reasons. Syllaeus was demanded “to be inscribed in Jewish customs”, while Epiphanes - to “come over to Jewish customs”. Remarkably, this time not a word is said about circumcision. While scholars tend to find an explanation for Syllaeus’ case by saying that since he was an Arab, he must already have been circumcised³⁵⁸, this explanation does not work for Epiphanes who being from Asia Minor is not likely to be without foreskin. Could it mean that Syllaeus and Epiphanes were not required to undergo circumcision, but to keep Jewish laws and customs while Ptolemy and Azizus were only expected to “be circumcised”? The explanation based on the vicinity of one’s country to Judea does not work for Epiphanes either. While one could assume that Polemo and Azizus could have fulfilled the very formal requirement that did not bring further consequences for them, namely the practice of Jewish laws and customs, because they returned home, where they were not exposed to Jewish environment (if we do not mention widespread Jewish communities in Asia Minor and Syria), the same should have applied to Epiphanes, son of the king of Commagene. Besides this, two candidates for the same wife, Epiphanes and Azizus (Azizus after Epiphanes gave up) are required theoretically two different things – the former – circumcision, the latter – “coming over to Jewish customs”. In this context, Josephus’ expressions in Ant. “to be circumcised” and “to adopt the customs of the Jews” in fact imply one another³⁵⁹: someone who has undergone circumcision, is expected to behave accordingly, that is, to practise Jewish laws and customs; at the same time, when Josephus speaks only about the adoption of Jewish laws and customs, he implies circumcision, since it belongs to most distinctive Jewish laws and customs.

Interestingly, regardless of whether or not Syllaeus was already circumcised, his refusal to adopt Jewish customs was said to result from his fear of his kinsmen who would stone him to death. Again, not really circumcision but other Jewish practices, apparently easily recognizable in public could pose a danger for the one who “crossed the boundary”³⁶⁰. The case of Polemo is equally telling in this regard. Namely, when Berenice left him, Polemo is said to immediately give up his loyalty to the marriage and “Jewish customs” (τοῖς ἔθεσι τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἐμμένειν ἀπὸλλασκε). There are two remarkable things in all this. First, Polemo was not said to be required to “live according to Jewish laws and customs” in Ant. 20:145 but only “to be circumcised”. Yet, once his marriage broke up, he is described as leaving the practice of Jewish customs (Ant. 20:146). The second thing is that once the marriage broke up, circumcision alone did not matter for Polemo, rather his personal decision concerning Jewish ἔθνη was the key point. This does not surprise us since, as a general rule, circumcision is reversible through a practice called *epispasm*³⁶¹. What is more, circumcision alone did not always matter for Jews as a mark of religious attachment – the practice of forced circumcision did not automatically ‘make’ non-Jewish slaves converts but

³⁵⁸ Cohen 2000: 227; Donaldson 2007: 328.

³⁵⁹ Likewise S.J.D. Cohen 1987: 421.

³⁶⁰ Likewise Schwartz 1982: 269-270; Donaldson 2007: 336.

³⁶¹ On epispasm in Jewish and Hellenistic literature, see R.G. Hall 1988; R.G. Hall 1992; Blaschke 1998: 350-356.

was performed only in to order to purify them and consequently enable them for their domestic work³⁶².

What is, then, the connection between circumcision and the practice of Jewish laws and customs in conversion in Josephus' Ant.? On the one hand, there is no reason to undermine the role of circumcision that is mentioned so many times in Josephus³⁶³ and sometimes appears to be a slogan for being or becoming Jewish (Ant. 20:139; Ant. 20:145-146 mentioned above as well as Bell. 2:454, Ant. 11:285³⁶⁴). However, as we have seen, in some places of Ant. Josephus speaks interchangeably about "adoption of Jewish laws/customs" and circumcision (Ant. 20:145: Polemo before marriage and 20:146: Polemo after divorce; Ant. 20:139 and 143: Epiphanes and Azizus in the context of the marriage with Drusilla); what is more, in some cases, Josephus speaks only about the "adoption of Jewish laws/customs" when he means the conversion (Ant. 13:397; Ant. 15:254). Therefore, there is every reason based on the texts discussed above to stress the role of the "adoption of Jewish laws and customs" not only as "a more general condition"³⁶⁵ but as the essence of crossing the cultural boundary. Circumcision alone does not suffice to cross the cultural boundary of the Jewish ἔθνος if it is not accompanied by the practice of Jewish laws and customs. This makes perfect sense for Josephus' persistence in depicting what we call conversion as the adoption of the ἔθη, νόμοι, or νόμιμα of the other ἔθνος.

All the main features of Josephus' thought observed so far, especially the idea of the existence of different ἔθνη which one can join by the adoption of their distinctive laws and customs, including circumcision in the case of the Jewish ἔθνος, can be found in Ant. 20:34-48. In fact, the whole passage "*brims* with the standard language of *ethnos*, law, and custom"³⁶⁶.

In Ant. 20:35 we hear that Helena "was taught and brought over to the laws (of the Jews)" (διδασθεῖσαν εἰς τοὺς ἐκείνων μετακεκομίσθαι νόμους). This is a good example of the language that points to the conversion by "adopting the laws of the Jews". Circumcision is not mentioned since the person under question is female and as such does not undergo circumcision³⁶⁷. Further, in Ant. 20:38 when Izates is said to see how much her mother was pleased with Jewish ἔθη, he desired to experience the same, that is "to be brought over to these laws" (εἰς ἐκείνα μεταθέσθαι νομίζων). Since Izates is male, circumcision applies to him only and he knows that without circumcision he will not be genuinely Jewish (καὶ αὐτὸς εἰς ἐκείνα μεταθέσθαι νομίζων τε μὴ ἂν εἶναι βεβαίως Ἰουδαῖος εἰ μὴ περιτέμνοιτο πράττειν ἦν ἕτοιμος). This is again a classic example of conversion being expressed by the phrase denoting the adoption of Jewish laws *and* circumcision. The third example of such a language can be found in Ant. 20:75 where Izates' brother Monobazos and his relatives are likewise said to admire Izates' piety and desired "to leave their native traditions and adopt (use) the Jewish customs" (αὐτοὶ τὰ πάτρια καταλιπόντες ἔθεσι χρῆσθαι τοῖς Ἰουδαίων). Remarkably, there is no word about circumcision. Monobazos' conversion is only described as the adoption of distinctively Jewish customs. Furthermore, an additional element explicitly appears here, namely, the conversion has two aspects: breaking allegiance and realigning with a new allegiance. The *breaking-motif* later plays a role in the way Izates' non-Jewish subjects would

³⁶² Hezser 2005: 30-31, 36-38, 44-47.

³⁶³ For a full list of references to circumcision, see Blaschke 1998.

³⁶⁴ What is more, the taking on Jewish customs and laws could theoretically stop short of circumcision (see Metilius' promise in Bell. 2:454 to μέχρι περιτομῆς Ἰουδαίσειν "Judaize as far as circumcision", which was also true for Izates until Ant. 20:56, but then Josephus would not use the same language of the adoption of Jewish laws and customs (e.g. εἰς πάτρια τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθη μεταβάλλω) as he uses in the cases mentioned above.

³⁶⁵ Donaldson 2007: 328.

³⁶⁶ Mason 2007: 506.

³⁶⁷ For D.R. Schwartz 2007b: 97 this is a sign that Helena could not become Jewish (foreign women could only live like Jews, but not actually become Jews). However, the language used to describe Helena's conversion is exactly the same as used for the conversion of the Idumeans in Ant. 13:397 (μεταβάλλω plus πάτρια τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθη). Further, the circumcision is not mentioned with regard to Monobazos and his conversion (like Helena's) is described by substantially the same language of adoption of Jewish laws and customs.

consider their converted king: for the Adiabene subjects of Izates, the laws and customs of the Jewish ἔθνος are “foreign and strange ἔθνη” (20:39, 20:47 and 20:81) as opposed to the ἔθνη and πατρία of the people of Adiabene (in 20:77 and 20:81 respectively). The *breaking-motif* in Ant. 20:17-96 perfectly fits what both Philo in his *Virt. and Jos. and Asen.* had to say on the matter; further, it also fits the Roman perception of Jewish converts who alienate themselves from their native background.

To summarize, Josephus’ understanding of the notion of conversion is that of joining a new ἔθνος and breaking away from one’s previous associations, and joining a new ἔθνος lies in the adoption of all laws and customs distinctive for a given culture.

4.3.2. When Did Izates’ Conversion Happen and How Did it Proceed?

In Ant. 20:34 Josephus finally returns to the topic that he already announced in 20:17 and he continues it until 20:48. Thus, Ant. 20:17-48 is a distinctive unit devoted to the topic of “Helena’s and Izates’ change of life to the customs of the Jews”. One observation is self-evident – it took Josephus a while (15 verses in 20:34 - 20:48) to describe what he had announced in one sentence in Ant. 20:17.

Remarkably, there is a world of difference in Josephus’ treatment of Izates’ conversion and that of Helena or Monobazos. Helena’s conversion is dealt with in one sentence in Ant. 20:55 and from there on it is presented as completed and, what is more, as influencing Izates. Likewise, Monobazos’ conversion, though outside Ant. 20:34-48, is introduced with one sentence in Ant. 20:75. This all shows that Ant. 20:34-48 is in fact focused on Izates’ change of life and its description is far from being terse. It rather seems that Izates’ change of life takes place as a process and Josephus takes pain to present it in full length.

There are three important moments of what will have become the change of Izates’ life (Ant. 20:17). First, it is Ant. 20:34-35 (Izates in Characene), secondly - Ant. 20:38-42 when Izates desires to be circumcised but Ananias’ advice dissuades him from that act, and finally - Ant. 20:43-48 when Eleazar convinces Izates to undergo circumcision. Our present aim is therefore to find out how Izates’ attachment to Jewish traditions gradually developed and how this picture contributes to our understanding of conversion as a process.

In Ant. 20:34 we read that Abennerigos’ (Izates’ host at the court of Characene) wives were taught by Ananias to worship God according to Jewish traditions (Ant. 20:34), then we learn (Ant. 20:35) that these women brought Ananias to Izates’ notice whom Ananias “similarly urged to persuade” (ὁμοίως συνανέπεισεν). Neusner and Gilbert think that it is the moment of Izates’ conversion³⁶⁸. However, Izates’ full change of life in Characene would leave nothing more for him to do after his return in Adiabene³⁶⁹. Secondly, in Ant. 20:38 Izates is said to admire to see how much her mother was pleased with Jewish ἔθνη, he desired to experience the same, that is “to be brought over to these laws” (εἰς ἐκείνα μεταθέσθαι νομίζων) and “to be circumcised without which he will not be genuinely Jewish” (τε μὴ ἂν εἶναι βεβαίως Ἰουδαῖος εἰ μὴ περιτέμνοιτο). Ergo, his conversion has not taken place yet, since he only desires it. Further, only now we come across what we have detected as Josephus’ standard language of conversion (ἔθνος, its distinctive laws and customs, the *breaking-motif*). This language starts with regard to Izates only in Ant. 20:38 (where Izates only ponders on “being genuinely Jewish”), and gains on strength until it reaches its climax in Ant. 20:46-47 wherein Izates has the circumcision accomplished, and the narrator comforts readers that Helena’s and Ananias’ fears will not be realized due to God’s protection. Immediately afterwards the conversion story comes to an end. Thus, Izates’ conversion (his change of life into Jewish customs) took place in Ant. 20:46. What are we then to make of Izates’ status prior to Ant. 40:46 when he has the circumcision done?

³⁶⁸ Neusner 1964a: 61; Gilbert 1990/1991: 307-308.

³⁶⁹ D.R. Schwartz 1996: 267.

In Ant. 20:34-35 the situation is a little complicated, since we hear of Izates' status only in connection to others, namely to Abennerigos' wives. Thus, first we are told that Abennerigos' wives³⁷⁰ (Izates' host at the court of Charakene) are taught to worship God (τὸν θεὸν σέβειν) according to Jewish traditions (ὡς Ἰουδαίους πατέριον ἦν). Then we read (Ant. 20:35) that these women brought Ananias to Izates' notice whom Ananias "similarly urged to persuade" (ὁμοίως συνανέπεισεν). What does the phrase τὸν θεὸν σέβειν actually mean? The standard interpretation is that this is a technical or semi-technical term denoting a clearly defined class of God-fearers, that is, non-Jews who were formally attached to Jewish communities but did not fully convert and thus stood somewhere between Jewish and non-Jewish world³⁷¹. Consequently, some scholars have called Izates "a semi-proselyte"³⁷², "a God-fearer"³⁷³ at this point of the narrative.

However, the interpretation of Izates' as belonging to the category of "God-fearer" or "semi-proselyte" in Ant. 20:35 is untenable for our text for two main reasons. First, it does not seem that the 1st c. CE sources in general use that phrase as a technical term, secondly, it is surely not the case in Ant. 20:17-96 in particular. Let us now justify both arguments in more detail.

As for the use of the terminology *God-fearing* in the 1st c. CE sources, according to the classic interpretation³⁷⁴, relevant evidence of the group of God-fearers can be found in the *Acts of Apostles*, in the writings of Josephus, as well as in some inscriptions. In fact, the label *God-fearer* is said to be expressed by a number of Greek equivalents. Namely, *Acts* contains the following phrases: φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν in 10:2, 10:22, 10:35, 13:16, 13:26 and σεβόμενοι (τὸν θεόν) in 13:43, 13:50, 16:14, 17:4, 17:17, 18:7. Josephus in turn recalls σεβόμενοι τὸν θεόν in Ant. 14:110. The adjective, θεοσεβής can be also found in *John* 9:31 and in Ant. 20:195. Further, the Greek epithet θεοσεβής (and the Latin *metuens*) appears in some inscriptions (the most prominent of which is that from Aphrodisias) and is believed to be used for non-Jews formally connected to Jewish communities³⁷⁵.

Generally speaking, the problem is that there is a great deal of diversity in the use of expressions denoting the phenomenon of the fear of God in ancient sources. The terms under consideration belong to a large family of Greek words conveying a broad notion of human piety³⁷⁶. Those are especially five groups: (1) εὐλάβεια, εὐλαβέομαι, εὐλαβής (2) εὐσέβεια, εὐσεβέω, εὐσεβής, εὐσεβῶς (3) θεοσεβεια, θεοσεβής; (4) σεβόμενοι, σεβόμενος τὸν θεόν (5) φοβέομαι, φοβούμενος τὸν θεόν³⁷⁷. They are not distinctively Jewish, but do appear in Greek literature and inscriptions where they are used by non-Jews to describe their own experience that, with regard to the divine sphere, encompasses a wide variety of human standings ranging from prejudice to piety and worship³⁷⁸. By way of illustration, Plato (*Leges*, 11.927ab) instructs the guardians of the ideal state to "worship the gods" (literally "τοὺς θεοὺς φοβεῖσθαι"). Again, Plutarch of Chaeronea uses the phrase θεοὺς

³⁷⁰ Here I follow Schwartz's interpretation (D.R. Schwartz 1996: 226) – the text speaks of Abennerigos' and not Izates' wives. While linguistically γυναῖκες τοῦ βασιλέως may refer both to Abennerigos and Izates, the latter was not yet a king at the moment of his stay in Characene.

³⁷¹ For a precise overview of history of discussion on this term, see Wander 1994: 173-185 and especially Wander 1998: 1-14.

³⁷² Schiffman 1987: 303.

³⁷³ Schürer 1909: 172-181; Vermes/Millar/Goodman 1986: 165-168; Kuhn/Stegemann 1962: 1260-1261; Kasting 1969: 25; Siegert 1973: 128-129; McEleney 1974: 323-324.

³⁷⁴ See especially Schürer 1909: 172-181; Vermes/Millar/Goodman 1986: 165-168, Kuhn/Stegemann 1962: 1260-1261; Siegert 1973: 128-129.

³⁷⁵ Lifshitz 1970: 77-84; Vermes/Millar/Goodman 1986: 162-168; Reynolds/Tannenbaum 1987. For a most up-to-date overview of all relevant inscriptions, see Levinskaya 1996: 51-82.

³⁷⁶ Bertram 1938: 124-126; Foerster 1964: 169-171; Wanke/Balz 1976: 189-219; Bultman 1976: 751-754; Wander 1998: 54-86.

³⁷⁷ Wander 1998: 54-86.

³⁷⁸ Bertram 1938: 124-126; Foerster 1964: 169-171; Wanke/Balz 1976: 189-219; Bultman 1976: 751-754; Wander 1998: 54-86.

φοβέσθαι in making the case that a proper reverence towards gods is a happy medium out of two extremes: irrational fear and atheism (*De Superstitione* 165b). Besides this, non-Jewish inscriptions in the Roman Empire often contain θεοσέβεια or θεοσεβείν³⁷⁹, e.g. a list of donors to the cult of Helios Mithraos in Histria in Moesia recalls their acts as θεοσέβεια³⁸⁰.

Further, there is a long Biblical tradition of the fear of God (e.g.: Gen 22:12, Gen 20:11, Exod 1:15-21, Exod 18:21, Deut 4:10, Deut 8:6; Deut 13:5; Deut 6:13; Deut 10:12; Deut 10:20; Deut 14:22-23; Deut 17:19; Josh 22:25, 2 Macc 1:3; 4 Macc 5:24; Isa 29:13; Jonah 1:9). Especially, Biblical Wisdom literature develops an ideal of those who “fear God” (particularly *Sirach* 10:19-24: οἱ φοβούμενοι τὸν κύριον). According to *Proverbs*, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom (Prov 9:10; 3:7; 24:21; 15:33, 1:7; 2:1-5). This ideal is thought for the Biblical audience in the first place. Thus, there is no hint whatsoever that the concept of those who “fear God” should be restricted to one group of people, especially non-Jews formally attached to Jewish communities, though not yet converted. What is more, Jewish sources also use that phrase to describe the worship of non-Jewish cults: e.g. *Jos. Asen.* 2:3; 9:2; 11:7; 13:11; Wis 15:6; Isa 66:14; Dan 3:90; 3 Macc 3:4.

The same kind of diversity in usage of phrases conveying the phenomenon of human fear of God/worship of God/human piety towards God can be found in Josephus. Josephus refers the phrase σεβόμενοι to Israelites, as well as to the Samaritans or even to other nations worshipping their native gods. Israelites are expected to worship God (Ant. 4:318: σέβειν), if they fail to worship God they get punished (Ant. 5:198; Ant. 8:418). Josephus praises kings like Hezekiah and Josiah for “worshipping God” (Ant. 9:264 and Ant. 10:50: σέβειν τὸν θεόν). In contrast, Josephus also recalls Israelite kings who “worshipped foreign gods” (Solomon in 8:192: σέβωνται; Jehoram in 9:27: ἐσέβeto; Amaziah in 9:193: σεβόμενος, Ahaz in 9:255: σεβόμενος), as well as mentions the appeal of the Midianite women that Israelites should “worship their native gods” (4:137: θεοὺς τοὺς ἡμετέρους σέβειν). Thus, other people’s cults can also be called “worshipping gods”. This usage is explicitly present in Josephus with regard to the inhabitants of Jonia in Ant. 12:126 (σέβεσθαι τοὺς αὐτῶν θεοὺς). Similarly, Josephus’ Samaritans (that is “the Cutheans who moved to Samaria”) are said by himself to bring their own cults into Samaria and “worship their native gods” there (Ant. 9:288: καὶ τούτους καθὼς ἦν πατριον αὐτοῖς σεβόμενοι). Thus, Israelites are supposed to worship God, other nations in fact worship their own gods, but all people, including the Samaritans, are welcome to come to Jerusalem and worship the only true God there (11:87).

Thus, we can observe that references to people fearing/worshipping God can neither be limited to a single group of people nor even to one tradition. At the same time, in some cases Jewish texts indeed speak of non-Jews who are called “God-fearing” and positively disposed towards Jews. For example, it is the case with Ant. 20:195 and probably with Ant. 14:110³⁸¹. In Ant. 20:195 Poppaea Sabina who then helped the embassy of Jerusalemites is called θεοσεβής. Does it already mean that Nero’s wife belonged to a formal class of God-fearers and that due to that adherence she helped the Jews? It seems that in cases like this we have ad hoc descriptions rather than a deliberate use of a technical term³⁸². The text simply praises Poppaea’s human attitude (the fear of God/piety) because she helped the Jews. In other words, the fear of God (a general human attitude) led Poppaea to help the Jews. There also might be a further sense in such Jewish descriptions of other non-Jews with a positive attitude for Jews or Jewish culture. Namely, such mentions can be understood as references to human fear of God/piety that existed among non-Jews too and at its height lead them into contact with the Jewish world that could take on various

³⁷⁹ Wander 1998: 128-132.

³⁸⁰ Woodhead 1974: no. 1104.

³⁸¹ Though the reading of σεβόμενοι τὸν θεόν as distinctive rather than descriptive of the first word in line has been disputed by Lake 1933: 85. Yet, see also Marcus 1952: 247-250 and Siegert 1973: 127.

³⁸² Collins 1985: 180.

forms. Such usage at its best seems to lie behind Luke's *Acts* who indeed draws a clear *literary* picture when it uses the term "God-worshippers". Yet, this picture is considered to have its equivalence only in the social and religious world of *Acts* and its readers³⁸³ and had it not been for this source, we would have only very few scattered and isolated literary instances of the God-fearer phrases used for non-Jews positively disposed towards Jews³⁸⁴. Thus, reading all other references through the perspective of *Acts*, the *locus classicus* of the God-worshipper-theory, puts us in danger of the instrumental interpretation of the very rare evidence left outside *Acts*.

Evidence of the Aphrodisias inscription is not as clear-cut as it seemed to be at the moment of the editio princeps³⁸⁵. In fact, the inscription consists of two independent texts, one from the 4th c. CE, and another from the 5th c. CE³⁸⁶. The former uses the term θεοσεβής as merely an honorary title for non-Jews who graciously contributed for the benefit of the Jewish community, the latter indeed uses the same term to describe a religious commitment to the Jewish community³⁸⁷. Only in the second case we may speak of a distinctive group of God-fearers formally connected to the Jewish community³⁸⁸. This is, however, only in the 5th c. CE. Surely, earlier Jewish and NT sources that call some non-Jews pious (or fearing God) reflect of a social phenomenon that with time must have flown into establishment of a publicly recognized group of God-fearers. Yet, this did not happen in the 1st c. CE but considerably later.

To sum up, a variety of terms used either to express the idea of a God-fearing person or to describe various degrees of human piety, proves that the term "to fear God" in its many forms in the 1st c. CE literature is not a technical term denoting any well-defined group. What is more, it is used of a number of religious attitudes. That is one reason why we cannot interpret Izates' status as a God-fearer from Ant. 20:34 until 20:46 in terms of a formal association to Jews. The second reason is that Izates is again described "worshipping God" (τὸν θεὸν σέβειν) in Ant. 20:88 even after his conversion. Can one be circumcised (and thus become Jewish) and still be (only) a God-fearer (in terms of a formal association with non-Jews)? Rather, in this case there would only be one option to choose. Thus, it is clear that Ant. 20:17-96 does not use the term τὸν θεὸν σέβειν as a technical term. At the same time, Ant. 20:17-96 is very persistent in using the vocabulary denoting various aspects of piety. Izates' εὐσέβεια is referred to in Ant. 20:37, 20:45; 20:48, 20:75, 20:94, while the phrase τὸν θεὸν σέβειν is used for him in Ant. 20:34, 20:41, 20:88. What is more, the conversion and Izates' piety are explicitly related to each other in 20:48. It all shows that there is a deep relation between Izates' way to Jewish traditions and his piety. Fearing God is a phenomenon of human piety that cannot be limited to the Jewish ἔθνος. It does exist and work in Jews, as well as in non-Jews. However, human piety at its height leads non-Jews into contact with Jewish traditions which apparently account for the most convenient environment for the growth of human piety. In this context, the next logical step would then be to adopt Jewish laws and customs in full (including circumcision for men) and formally associate with Jews. Such processes can be easily found in Ant. 20:34-48. In Ant. 20:34-38 Izates is shown to have the first contact with Jewish laws, and this contact shapes what he subsequently does. He is glad to have close contact with a Jewish teacher, Ananias, he is used to read the Bible, his just treatment of his claimants to the throne (Ant. 20:36-37) can also be attributed to this influence. Thus, we cannot say that the text implies only two options – either a Jew or a non-Jew who does not observe any Jewish practices prior to his circumcision³⁸⁹. Rather the picture is more one of a continuum and Izates moves along the continuum that started with first teaching, then moved to various degrees of reverence towards God

³⁸³ Koch 2006: 80-82.

³⁸⁴ Kraabel 1981: 114-115.

³⁸⁵ Reynolds/Tannenbaum 1987: 19-24; van der Horst 1990: 166-181.

³⁸⁶ Botermann 1993: 184-194; Bonz 1994: 281-299; Chaniotis 2002: 209-242; Ameling 2004: no. 14, 71-112.

³⁸⁷ Koch 2006: 65-75.

³⁸⁸ Koch 2006: 74-75.

³⁸⁹ See D.R. Schwartz 1996: 265-272.

and eventually will end in the adoption of Jewish laws and customs through circumcision³⁹⁰. Only then the process of μεταβολή was completed. That is why Josephus did not deal with Izates' conversion in one sentence. But he instead described a lengthy process of a change of life that is driven by human piety towards the Divine and finally leads to the adoption of Jewish laws.

4.3.3. All Things Being Equal? Josephus, Conversion and his Audience

At crucial moments of making decisions about his religious commitment, Izates received two different pieces of advice – one from Ananias and the other from Eleazar. The question arises whether we are to treat them as alternatives or maybe, since Izates' change of life comes as the culmination of a lengthy process, as complimentary steps. Surprisingly, both statements may be valuable. First, there is clearly a certain contrast between Ananias' position and that of Eleazar in the text.

- 1- Ananias' instruction in Ant. 20:42 had withheld Izates from what he finally did following Eleazar's advice. This tension is explicitly expressed in Ant. 20:43.
- 2- When Izates follows Eleazar and has the circumcision performed, this fact is said to frighten Ananias – Ant. 20:47.
- 3- Lastly, when in Ant. 20:48 we have a very meaningful statement in the narrative about God's providence, this providence is explicitly said to prevent Ananias' (and Helena's) fears from being realized.

Secondly, since Josephus recalls both Ananias' position and that of Eleazar, he wants his readers/listeners to tell something through this very fact. Thus, the text records some tension between both positions. Yet, if we ask why Josephus recalled them both, and what we are to make of the meaning of the narrative as a whole, then it is exactly so that the role of each teacher makes sense in Izates' life, especially at certain stages of the lengthy process preceding his μεταβολή.

While Ananias' words have occasioned a lot of scholarly dispute, the words of Eleazar are more straightforward. Let us therefore start with them. Eleazar comes to the monarch who is reading the Law of Moses, and urges Izates to be circumcised. His arguments for this rite are as follows. The first is a very basic one, and can be referred to most spheres of human activity, but particularly to religion, “you should not merely read but do what is commanded by what you have read” (see similar ideas on the *strict* observance of *all* commandments in Deut 6:1-25 (esp. 6:2.17.24-25); Matt 7:21, 23:3; Jas 1:22). However, Eleazar goes further since he warns Izates of impiety being done by the monarch. Namely, Izates is uncircumcised and as such breaks νόμοι especially the greatest of νόμοι – the circumcision. In this way, Izates not only refuses to follow Jewish laws but also trespasses against God himself. This is Eleazar's strict view on God and His commandments - what really counts is the practice. And since Eleazar is said by Josephus to have a reputation for being extremely strict when it comes to ancestral customs (Ant. 20:43 - πάνυ περὶ τὰ πάτρια δοκῶν ἀκριβῆς εἶναι); he apparently does not recognize any value behind various traditions of other people as, for example, Aristeeas apparently did by saying that the Jews and the Greeks worship the same God but by different names (Aristeeas' speech recalled in Ant. 12:22)³⁹¹. For Eleazar Jewish customs and laws are given to all and consequently non-Jews should join the Jews (for some parallel see Rom 1:19-21)³⁹². If that is the case, we also receive the answer to Gilbert's reservation that Eleazar could not imply Izates' impiety unless he held that Izates was already Jewish³⁹³. We may respond to that by pointing to several Jewish texts that take the impiety of non-Jews as intrinsic (Isa 54:3; Mic 5:10-15; Zeph 2:10-11; Sir 36:7; 1QM 12:10; Pss. Sol. 17:25-

³⁹⁰ Donaldson 2007: 337; likewise Blaschke 1998: 234, n. 1011.

³⁹¹ See D.R. Schwartz 1996: 271-272.

³⁹² So D.R. Schwartz 1996: 271-272; Donaldson 2007: 336.

³⁹³ Gilbert 1990/1991: 308.

27)³⁹⁴. Thus, Eleazar's options for Izates are either to adopt Jewish laws and customs or to remain non-Jewish and consequently remain without God's favour.

What was then the point of view held by Ananias (καὶ χωρὶς τῆς περιτομῆς τὸ θεῖον σέβειν εἶγε πάντως κέκρικε ζηλοῦν τὰ πάτρια τῶν Ἰουδαίων τοῦτ' εἶναι κυριώτερον τοῦ περιτέμνεσθαι)? Some scholars think that according to Ananias one can be a Jew without circumcision³⁹⁵. There are three reasons why it is hard to accept this interpretation. First, the idea of Jewishness without circumcision would be unusual if we take account of the fact that most Jewish sources accentuate the role of circumcision in the process of conversion³⁹⁶. There are always some scholars that point to separate sources (e.g. Philo, *De migratione Abrahami* 89-93, *Quaestiones et solutiones in Exodum* 2.2; 1 Macc 1:15, 1:48) and conclude that for some Jews circumcision was not the sine qua non condition for being/becoming Jewish³⁹⁷. The interpretation of these passages is very controversial, and their detailed discussion cannot be related in full here, but let us briefly remark that there is a world of difference between Jews who had Jewish ancestors for centuries and lived in rather closed Jewish communities but stopped circumcising on the one hand (and the disputed sources in fact refer to them)³⁹⁸, and novices on the other – non-Jews who came from the outside and wanted to live according to the Jewish manner³⁹⁹. Thus, finding examples for Jews who wanted to modify their Jewish way of life by removing circumcision is not the same as finding parallels for not obliging converts to be circumcised (in order to join Jewish communities that do practise circumcision!).

Secondly, in no place of Ananias' statement, is there a single word that Izates will be Jewish⁴⁰⁰. It is only said that first he can τὸ θεῖον σέβειν, secondly that his decision to “be zealous of ancestral customs of the Jews” counts more than circumcision, and thirdly that his omission will be pardoned. The phrase τὸν θεὸν σέβειν, as we already know, can mean a number of human attitudes towards gods/god; here it seems to simply mean *worship, reverence* towards God. Consequently, the phrase alone does not mean *to be Jewish*, what is more, its usage in Ant. 20:41 is

³⁹⁴ Eisenbaum 2009: 101-102, 106-107. For a full collection of Jewish texts on “gentile impurities”, see Hayes 2002.

³⁹⁵ Klausner 1944: 38-40; McEleney 1974: 323-324; Collins 1985:179 (undecided); Gilbert 1990/1991: 229-313; McKnight 1991:80; Borgen 1996:53; R. Goldenberg 1998: 60.

³⁹⁶ The most comprehensive collection of sources on Jewish circumcision is offered by Blaschke 1998. In Josephus it is recalled in the following passages: Bell. 2:454, 1:34-35; Ant. 1:191-193.214; Ant. 11:285; Ant. 12:241-278; Ant. 13:257-258, 318-319; Ant. 20:34-48; Ant. 20:139, 145-146; Ant. 8:262; C. Ap. 1:168-171; C. Ap. 2:137-144.

³⁹⁷ Klausner 1944: 38-40; McEleney 1974: 323-324; R.G. Hall 1988: 79; Gilbert 1990/1991: 229-313; McKnight 1991:80; Borgen 1996: 53; R. Goldenberg 1998: 60.

³⁹⁸ This is the case with 1 Macc and Philo's texts, esp. with Philo's *QE* 2.2 where the term *proselytes* are referred to native-born Israelites. For this problem, see Nolland 1981: 173-179 and Leonhardt-Balzer 2007: 40.

³⁹⁹ As for new-comers and the question of requirements for entry into the Jewish community, there are two groups of traditions that have to be considered here. First, it is the Rabbinic tradition, especially the Talmudic discussion between Rabbi Joshua and Eliezer in *BT Yebamot* 46a. While Rabbi Eliezer considers circumcision to be a condition sine qua non for conversion, Rabbi Joshua thinks that it is not circumcision but baptism that is necessary, thus, one might argue, according to Rabbi Joshua it was permissible to convert without circumcision. However, the point of the Talmudic discussion was not whether or not it is permissible to convert without circumcision, but which requirement actually established the status of the proselyte definitely (Bamberger 1939: 49-51; Nolland 1981: 182-192; Schiffman 1987: 304-305). In other words, “at what moment in the procedure of conversion does the convert cease to be a heathen and become a Jew?” (Bamberger 1939: 49-51). Note that the Palestinian Talmud (*Qiddushin* 3:14) presents the same debate in a slightly different way – Eliezer claims that circumcision alone is sufficient for conversion, whereas Joshua holds the view that baptism is also necessary (Bamberger 1939: 49-51). Thus, in the Palestinian Talmud there is even less room for speculations that anyone could accept converts without circumcision. Secondly, there is the question of NT communities that in fact had to decide about what to do with circumcision as an identity marker for some of its members. Indeed, the NT community understands itself as a righteous continuation of the OT community, but in expressing its identity, it most frequently resorts to other self-appellations than that centred on the Ἰουδαῖος-meaning. The term that appears most frequently is (the new) Israel. For the use of different self-appellations in Jewish and Christian communities, see Lowe 1976; Harvey 1996; Sanders 2000; and Bergsma 2008.

⁴⁰⁰ Blaschke 1998: 235-236.

‘less Jewish’ than its appearance in Ant. 20:34⁴⁰¹. Namely, in Ant. 20:34 the phrase τὸν θεὸν σέβειν is explicitly connected to τὰ πάτρια τῶν Ἰουδαίων, whereas it shows up without this addition in Ant. 20:41. As for the second statement (“zealous of Jewish ancestral customs” versus circumcision), let us remark that Ant. 20:41 contains the verb κρίνω in the perfect tense (κέκρικε). Thus, the text does not say that Izates did follow Jewish laws or would follow them⁴⁰², but he *wants* to be zealous of ancestral laws of the Jews⁴⁰³. In other words, the text emphasizes only Izates’ desire. The reason for emphasizing Izates’ desire apparently lies in the fact that Izates would not be able to follow Jewish laws if he was not circumcised, but that God appreciates Izates’ desire to undertake an act rather than the actual fulfilment of it and can forgive omission of a commandment if there is a reasonable cause. That is a picture of a mild God unlike the picture of God according to Eleazar (what really counts is practise and those who fail to obey religious laws can be perceived by God as sinners against Himself). Nevertheless (here we come to the third statement in Ant. 20:41), if Izates is not circumcised, there is still something to be forgiven and Ananias promises this pardon because of Izates’ inner disposition (revealed through his desire). Izates’ lack of circumcision is seen by Ananias as “understandable or forgivable rather than as right”⁴⁰⁴.

There is another reason why we cannot accept the understanding of Ananias’ statement in Ant. 20:41 as acknowledging Jewishness without circumcision. Ananias and Helena warn Izates that if he undergoes circumcision, he will lose his throne. Their reservation does not concern circumcision itself (note that Ananias is Jewish, and Helena herself has just converted), but is connected with political consequences⁴⁰⁵. Namely, the reason is a potential dislike of Izates’ subjects. What is the object of that dislike? Circumcision? Remarkably, the danger posed to Izates by his Adiabene subjects is never explicitly referred to his circumcision but to the practice of “Jewish ancestral customs” and “being Jewish” (Ant. 20: 39; 20:41; 20:46; 20:77; 20:81). Circumcision itself is not mentioned as subject of the dislike of the Adiabene population. If Ananias suggests that Izates could be Jewish without circumcision, would it change anything for his subjects? Not really and this is understandable since not circumcision itself but other Jewish public practices such as the observance of the Sabbath or dietary laws would become much easier subject of public knowledge among Izates’ subjects⁴⁰⁶. Thus, we have to see in Ant. 20:34-48 a whole exchange that rests on the assumption that either Izates will be Jewish and his subjects will despise him or he will not become Jewish and then there will be no danger of his subjects revolting⁴⁰⁷. The idea of being uncircumcised but Jewish would not change anything in the perception of Izates’ subjects.

The question still remains what Ananias suggested to Izates as an alternative to conversion? What does the phrase τὸ θεῖον σέβειν mean in that context? Some scholars have suggested that the difference in opinion between Ananias and Eleazar concerns their approach to non-Jews⁴⁰⁸. There are two reasons that may speak in favour of such an interpretation⁴⁰⁹. First, there are other textual

⁴⁰¹ Likewise Blaschke 1998: 235.

⁴⁰² Blaschke 1998: 235.

⁴⁰³ In contrast to D.R. Schwartz 1996: 269 who thinks that the Greek κέκρικε should be translated as “he has decided”.

⁴⁰⁴ Nolland 1981: 193-194.

⁴⁰⁵ Likewise Blaschke 1998: 235: political consideration comes first, and only then Ananias resorts to theological consideration, while in the case of Helena it is only the issue of politics that comes to the fore.

⁴⁰⁶ D.R. Schwartz 1996: 269 and 269, n. 21; S.J.D. Cohen 2000: 39-49.

⁴⁰⁷ Donaldson 2007: 336.

⁴⁰⁸ Collins 1985: 178-179; Feldman 1993: 333; A.F. Segal 1990: 99-100; D.R. Schwartz 1996: 268-269; Blaschke 1998: 237. To be precise, most scholars put it as „conditions for salvation for Gentiles”. However, the aim of one’s religiosity and worship of the gods does not have to refer to the problem of salvation only (or a share in the world to come, to put it differently).

⁴⁰⁹ There could be another interpretation, namely that raised up by D.R. Schwartz who points to the language of the phrase. The phrase indeed contains the noun θεῖον and not θεός and Schwartz suggests that the former is more

parallels that help back up such an understanding, secondly, such interpretation fits best the context of both Ant. 20:17-96 and Josephus' writings in general.

The Jews, especially in the Diaspora, formed an ethnic minority within society. As we already know, although some non-Jews were willing to join the Jewish *ἔθνος*, most of them were not. It is natural that some Jewish sources were concerned with the question of what stand Jews should take towards the outsiders who would never join the Jewish *ἔθνος*. The underlying assumption of such a question may differ from one source to another. What should non-Jews do to be saved (like Acts 15:10: *σωθῆναι*), how can they attain a sound life (*Sib. Or.* 3:702-709), or how to give back the respect to God that is apparently expected by Him (*Let. Aris.* 16)? In short, the fact is that only very few Jewish sources want non-Jews to convert to fulfill any of the above-mentioned purposes⁴¹⁰, and not all Jewish sources treat non-Jews as intrinsically unclean. E.g. the Egyptian Sibyllines (3.624-634, 716-723, 762-766⁴¹¹) do not expect non-Jews to undergo circumcision or even practice more distinctively Jewish commandments, but to repent of idolatry, to worship the true God in Jerusalem, and to follow certain moral practices⁴¹². Neither does the *Letter of Aristeas* recommend conversion that even seems to be pointless, since the text emphasizes that both Greeks and Jews worship the same God but under different names. Thus, different national traditions are presented as equal and serving the same purpose – a true worship of God⁴¹³. Later sources like Talmudic literature or the Aphrodisias inscription shows that some Jewish communities either formulated certain requirements to follow for non-Jews if they wanted to have a share in the world to come (Noahide laws) or they even set up a certain status for non-Jews who would never convert but wanted to remain formally attached to Jewish communities sharing some views and practices of the Jews (the Aphrodisias inscription in the 5th c. CE).

Thus, it is not unusual that Ananias would recommend Izates to remain who he was – a God-fearing non-Jew, since he could not join the Jewish *ἔθνος* for political reasons. Such an idea is present in some strata of the Jewish world and would be also understood by Josephus' non-Jewish audience since there existed a monotheistic belief among the educated in ancient times that grew up independently from the Jewish wisdom and Christianity⁴¹⁴. Ananias' advice could be easily understood in the context of universalistic tendencies of the ancient world, attested both in Jewish sources and non-Jewish texts⁴¹⁵.

What is more, such tendencies can be also found in Josephus. He never discusses whether or not circumcision is needed for being Jewish, and at no other point does Josephus report anything even slightly comparable to such a dilemma. Probably, it is so because circumcision as the gate to the Jewish *ἔθνος* is obvious for him. At the same time, we can find many texts in Josephus that

universal while the latter – more specific, especially more distinctively Jewish in that context. Thus, Ananias would recommend Izates to “revere” the supreme deity of the world, in other words, the Divine that manifests itself through different traditions. It is a very tempting argument. However, we do think that *θεῖον* and *θεός* are used by Josephus interchangeably. Further, it is hard to find a good parallel wherein the narrator clearly nuances the meaning by the switch from *θεός* to *θεῖον* that would aim at distinguishing particular traditions (*θεός*) from the common background of various religious traditions (*θεῖον*). The best place where such a distinction could work is Ant. 12:11-119 (the *Letter of Aristeas* in Josephus), but it is not present there at all. Josephus is persistent in using *θεός* where, in accordance with Schwartz' idea, *θεῖον* could better express the universalistic background of both Jewish and Greek traditions. Schwartz' idea that *θεός* and *θεῖον* have different meanings is backed up by his references to Shutt 1980:176-179 and Siegert: 1973: 129, n. 1. Indeed, Siegert formulates such an idea, but Shutt actually states the opposite, that both terms are in most cases interchangeable.

⁴¹⁰ Zangenberg 2005: 18.

⁴¹¹ For the text and the commentary, see Buitenwerf 2003: 238-246, 268-269, 280-285.

⁴¹² Collins 1984: 165-166.

⁴¹³ Hadas 1951: 62.

⁴¹⁴ See Tromp 1995: 105-120.

⁴¹⁵ See Tromp 1995: 105.

show a positive attitude towards non-Jews and do not expect them to convert⁴¹⁶. Josephus is proud of non-Jews honouring God in Jerusalem (Bell. 2:409-417; Bell. 4:181; Bell. 4:262; Bell. 4:275; Bell. 4:324; Bell. 5:15-18; Bell. 5:562-564; Ant. 3:318-319, Ant. 8:116-117, Ant. 11:3-5; Ant. 11:87; Ant. 11:103; Ant. 11:331-336; Ant. 13:78; Ant. 13:242-244; Ant. 14:110; Ant. 18:122; C. Ap. 2:48), stresses the personal piety of certain non-Jews (Bell. 2:221; Ant. 11:103; Ant. 11:120-132; Ant. 13:242-244; Ant. 18:122; Ant. 18:286, 288, 309; Ant. 20:195; C. Ap. 1:162), depicts non-Jews as having a common understanding of God with the Jews (Bell. 2:340-341, Bell. 5:519; Ant. 11:87, Ant. 11:103; Ant. 12:22; Ant. 13:69-71; Ant. 18:286, 288, 309), acknowledges or even brags about the great popularity of some Jewish laws and customs all over the world (Bell. 2:559-561; Bell. 7:45; Ant. 3:214-217; Ant. 14:110; C. Ap. 1:162; C. Ap. 1:166; C. Ap. 1:225; C. Ap. 2:45; C. Ap. 2:279-284), stresses that non-Jews also might independently arrive at some understanding of the true God in their native cultures (Bell. 3:444; Ant. 12:22; C. Ap. 2:163; C. Ap. 2:168; C. Ap. 2:255-257).

Izates as a pious non-Jew (before his circumcision in Ant. 20:46) fits well this strain of Josephus' positive picture of the non-Jewish world. But for Eleazar, he would surely remain a non-Jew who acted piously and justly (Ant. 20:37), maintained a close relation with Jewish teachers (Ant. 20:35,40), welcomed eminent Jews travelling through Adiabene (Ant. 20:43-44), even practiced some Jewish customs like reading the Torah (Ant. 20:44). Yet, he would not become Jewish and therefore would not risk his throne because of his subjects who "would not bear a Jew ruling over them".

Lastly, since we have analysed what Ananias and Eleazar advised to Izates, and we know what came out of it, we need to ask what we are to make of the fact that Josephus recalled both Ananias' and Eleazar's advice for Izates, though they essentially differed from each other? The answer is important if we take account of the fact that Josephus presents his work to a primarily non-Jewish audience. Thus, he writes to non-Jews about another non-Jew, Izates who finally adopted Jewish traditions. Does Josephus recommend his listeners/readers to follow Ananias' advice or that of Eleazar? Yet, if he fully sympathizes with Eleazar, this means that he would expect or even urge his non-Jewish listeners/readers to be immediately circumcised?

There seems to be at least three possible solutions. First, Josephus merely reports and does not take sides. Secondly, he closely aligns himself with one of his protagonists (either Ananias or Eleazar). Thirdly, he has some sympathy for Ananias and Eleazar alike, though there is some preference.

When it comes to Ananias, Josephus does not explicitly criticize him, and Ananias' contribution to Izates' change of life is depicted positively in Ant. 20:17-96. Ananias was, after all, Izates' first teacher of Jewish $\epsilon\theta\eta$. Furthermore, Ananias' approach resembles that behind the *Letter of Aristeeas* which Josephus not only quotes in Ant. 12:11-191 but is apparently proud of its message⁴¹⁷. On the other hand, in Ant. 20:48 Josephus as the narrator steps outside the plot and comments heavily on the course of action and praises Izates' act as an example of an extraordinary trust in God. Ergo, Ananias' position was not perfect, to say the least, and what Josephus praises in Ant. 20:48 was advised by Eleazar. Further, Eleazar's idea of strict adherence to the laws (Ant. 20:43-44) recalls Josephus' own words from the preface in Ant. 1:14.

Thus, the first option has to be ruled out, both Ananias' and Eleazar's words stand for something that was close to Josephus himself. However, Eleazar's advice proved to be better and Josephus clearly tells us about it in his editorial comment in Ant. 20:48. On balance, Josephus does have two options for non-Jews – being a pious non-Jew well disposed towards Jewish traditions

⁴¹⁶ For the whole collection of Josephus' texts positively disposed towards non-Jews, see Donaldson 2007: 288-361. See, of course, reviews of Donaldson's ideas in J.A. Harrill 2009: 181-183; J. Schwartz 2010.

⁴¹⁷ Donaldson 2007: 287.

(Ananias) or fully adopting Jewish laws and customs (Eleazar)⁴¹⁸. The first option is well welcomed, the second is a step further: “all things being equal, being Jewish is better than being God-fearing”⁴¹⁹. In Izates’ life both approaches made sense in their own time and to a certain degree. Ananias’ introduced Izates into Jewish traditions. The role of teaching laws and customs is in fact indispensable. If Izates as Josephus’ non-Jewish audience remained at that level, it would be good. Yet, later, Izates decided to put his trust entirely in God and completed the process of μεταβολή of his life to the fullest by genuinely becoming Jewish and this was something more.

4.4. Conclusions

1. Josephus understands conversion as a deep change of life. Technically, conversion means joining the other ἔθνος. In Ant. 20:17-96, as well as throughout the whole Ant., a male could become Jewish only by adopting all Jewish customs and laws including circumcision.

2. The text of Ant. 20:17-96 does not speak of any “God-fearers” as a formal group. However, it well mirrors a social phenomenon of non-Jews approaching Jews and exposing different degrees of interest in Jewish traditions. It also touches on the broad issue of the fear of God and piety present among non-Jews that can lead them into contact with Jewish traditions being the highest form of human piety.

3. Consequently, in Ant. 20:17-96 Izates moves along a continuum of different stages of interest in Jewish traditions. He gradually takes on more and more Jewish traditions and finally decides to join the Jewish ἔθνος. In this way, the process of a deep change of his life comes to an end. This is what can be labelled as “crossing the cultural boundary” or *conversion*.

4. Two Jewish teachers, Ananias and Eleazar both played positive roles in Izates’ change of life. Ananias supplied Izates with teaching – that is an indispensable element of a genuine change of one’s life. Eleazar encouraged Izates to take one step further – to fully rely on God in the choice of what he perceived as ‘being more’.

5. Looking at Josephus’ stand on the phenomenon of a positive interest of non-Jews in Jewish traditions through the examples of his two protagonists – Ananias and Eleazar, we may say that Josephus approved of every form of sympathization on the side of non-Jews. He considered it as a good and welcome phenomenon. Nevertheless, if one could go further and join the Jewish ἔθνος, despite all inconveniences and dangers, in Josephus’ eyes, such a person reached out to the highest ideal of human piety.

⁴¹⁸ Likewise Blaschke 1998: 237: *Eleazar vertritt ein Proselytenmodell ... Ananias steht dagegen für ein Gottesfürchtigenmodell.*

⁴¹⁹ A.F. Segal 1990: 100.