

Paul, Josephus, and the Judean Nationalistic and Imperialistic Policy of Forced Circumcision¹

Honora HOWELL CHAPMAN

California State University, Fresno
hchapman@csufresno.edu

ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the background for the Judean nationalistic and imperialistic policy of forced circumcision as it developed through the Hasmonean period, and then how this policy should be taken into account when examining the issue of circumcision in the works of Paul, especially the Letter to the Galatians, and also in Josephus' writings. Both of these first-century Jews rejected forced circumcision of Gentiles when creating and maintaining their own communities, and I argue that it is essential to view their respective choices as a direct response to the remembered history of the Judean policy of forced circumcision. Previous scholarship on this issue has focused mainly on the question of conversion and has not made a *direct* connection between Paul, Josephus, and the Judean policy of forced circumcision.

Key words: Paul. Josephus. Judean Policy of Forced Circumcision

Pablo, Josefo y la política nacionalista de la circuncisión forzosa en el reino de Judea

RESUMEN

Este trabajo analiza los presupuestos de la política nacionalista e imperialista de la circuncisión forzosa en el reino de Judea, tal como fue desarrollada en el tiempo de los Asmoneos, y propone tomar en consideración esa política al estudiar el asunto de la circuncisión en los escritos de Pablo (especialmente en la Carta a los Gálatas) y en los de Josefo. Estos dos judíos del siglo I rechazaron la circuncisión forzada de los gentiles al crear sus propias comunidades, y así considero esencial comprender su actitud como reacción ante el recuerdo de aquella política de Judea. La investigación precedente acerca de este asunto se ha dirigido sobre todo a la cuestión de la conversión y no ha establecido la relación directa entre Pablo, Josefo y dicha política de circuncisión forzosa.

Palabras clave: Pablo. Josefo. Política de la circuncisión forzosa en Judea

SUMARIO Introduction. Male circumcision. The Hasmonean conquests and forced circumcision. Paul and forced circumcision. Josephus and forced circumcision. Conclusion

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INTRODUCTION

The gendered representation of the social body of Israel shifts between the Judaism represented by the Book of Tobit and that of the Rabbis of late antiquity. For the Hellenistic-Jewish novella, only a male figure can represent Israel (Levine, 1992, 113); the Rabbis can conceive of themselves, and of the people, as female. We might conceive of this as a move from a Douglassian world within which the primary concern is the reestablishing of the chaotic and threatened borders of purity to a Bakhtinian one in which it is precisely the breaching of borders of the social/individual body that produces life; from one in which diaspora and feminization [sic] of the social body are seen only as a threat to one in which they are celebrated (however warily) for their ethical and creative possibilities.²

In their book *Powers of Diaspora*, Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin state that their goal is «to evoke the diasporic genius of Jewishness, that genius that consists in the exercise and preservation of cultural power separate from the coercive power of the state.»³ I would like, however, to examine an issue that the Boyarins pass over and to ask: what happens when those who belong to the Judean culture have the opportunity to act coercively by forcing circumcision on others when forming and/or maintaining a Judean community or state?⁴ In other words, between the time of the Book of Tobit (third century BCE) and that of the rabbinic literature (starting in the second century CE), during which the Boyarins perceive a shift in the representation of Israel, on which occasions do we find Jews—their ancient Greek name was Ἰουδαῖοι, or Judeans—exercising and preserving their «cultural power,» while at the same time pressing the issue of this power upon others, specifically in the form of «forced» circumcision? And when and why do others within the Judean community represent themselves as choosing *not* to use such coercion?

I am focusing on this particular phenomenon of «forced» circumcision⁵ because it occurs at heightened moments when Judeans attempt to create, maintain, and augment particular Judean communities of various types during the late Second Temple

² J. Boyarin and D. Boyarin, *Powers of Diaspora: Two Essays on the Relevance of Jewish Culture*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002, from the chapter “Tricksters, Martyrs, and Collaborators,” on 39. In n. 5 on 134, they explain *femminization*: «We use this artificial coinage, based on ‘femme’ as in butch/femme, in order to indicate the constructed and nonessentialist character of the ‘feminization’ imputed to these sociocultural practices.» The Boyarins’ point about the shift in Jewish perception of its own cultural power is valid, but I think there is no reason to make a fetish of one aspect of modern sexual culture by coining such a word, since burgeoning transgender and other multi-gender identity movements create new complexities that may make even a clever neologism like this ephemeral.

³ *Ibid.*, vii.

⁴ The issue of «forced» circumcision would have been a far more compelling proof of their point than the Josephan episode at Masada, but they do analyze the latter well on 46-54. They discuss «femminization through circumcision» in both Roman and Jewish texts on 87-90.

⁵ Some scholars express doubt over whether it was forced by the Hasmoneans; see my discussion below.

period from the second century BCE until the Roman suppression of the Judean revolt from 66-73 CE. These communities include: 1) the Judean kingdom under the Hasmoneans, as described in Josephus' *Judean Antiquities* and *Judean War*, 1 Maccabees, as well as other ancient texts; 2) the mid-first-century Christian movement in Galatia, as presented in the letter of Paul; and 3) the Judean rebel movement during the first Jewish Revolt against the Romans, as attested in Josephus' accounts of the war and of his own career. When scholars try to interpret the exhortation of the Jew Paul against the circumcision of the ethnically non-Jewish male followers of Jesus, especially in the letter to the Galatians, they usually either sidestep or, at best, mention the idea of circumcision as a specifically Judean imperialistic condition for staying in land newly conquered by the people of Israel.⁶ Furthermore, scholars generally do not usually compare⁷ Paul's message on circumcision directly with the writings of another first-century Jew, Josephus, who reports both on a Roman commander having submitted to circumcision in order to live, and also describes himself as a Judean general facing the same question of whether or not to circumcise non-Jewish men within the land of Israel during the revolt.

Paul and Josephus, who in their writings reject mandatory circumcision, have inherited the remembered history of Judean nationalism in the second and first centuries BCE, including moments of imperialistic expansion beyond previous borders of the state; with this imperialistic expansion came mandatory circumcision of males ordered by the Hasmonean kings when trying to form and maintain a Jewish community with land and people freshly conquered and literally incorporated⁸ into their Judean state. In arguing that Paul must be read in light of Roman imperialism,

⁶ N.J. McEleneay, "Conversion, Circumcision and the Law," *NTS* 20 (1974) 319-341 arrays all the information but does not make a specific link, and treats all under rubric of religious conversion; also see P. Fredriksen, "Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and the Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2," *Journal of Theological Studies* 42 (1991), 532-564, and especially n. 72. L. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, 324 juxtaposes treatment of Paul with a next section on "Forced Conversions in the Land of Israel," but he does not present Paul as reacting to this history. Feldman is responding especially to A. Kasher, *Jews, Idumaeans, and Ancient Arabs*, Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1988. S. Cohen, *Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, adds to the discussion by seeing the issue in terms of πολιτεία—see below.

⁷ S. Cohen "Respect for Judaism by Gentiles according to Josephus" *Harvard Theological Review* 80 (1987) 409-430, comes close to a direct comparison with Gal. 2:14 over the term «judaize» on 418, but says that the judaizing of Metilius in *B.J.* 2 (see my text below) is like that in Galatians, but not like that of the Gentiles in Syria who judaize; Josephus does not make a distinction, and I think it is very hard to know.

⁸ As Mary Douglas has explained in *Purity and Danger*, London: Routledge, 1966, 115-116, in response to Bettelheim's psychoanalytic interpretation of circumcision and initiation rites: «The body is a model which can stand for any bounded system....What is being carved in human flesh is an image of society.» See also H. Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, especially 172-173, for the argument that circumcision, which is linked with «fertility, procreation, and intergenerational continuity between males,» is what mattered most to Israelite priests who promoted the practice.

Neil Elliott has singled out John Barclay's attention to «*Jewish* 'cultural imperialism'»⁹ as emblematic of a prevailing scholarly approach in Pauline studies whereby «the abiding preoccupation with Paul's supposed debate with Judaism continues to eclipse any critical interaction on his part with the ideology of empire.»¹⁰ Elliott seems not to appreciate the possibility that Judean behavior towards other people could be construed as—or, in fact, be—imperialistic, but he is hardly alone in this.

I shall review the findings of scholars who have previously investigated this phenomenon of «forced» circumcision and have questioned whether it even occurred. What interests me ultimately is not the well-explored issue of religious conversion,¹¹ but instead: 1) how and why Paul and Josephus as two very different Jewish leaders in the first century promote strong communities with Judean roots without resorting to mandatory male circumcision, which was the legacy of the nationalistic and imperialistic Judean past, and 2) how successful this turns out to be for each of them and their distinct communities. Though it may seem odd to compare militaristic religious leaders like the Hasmoneans and Josephus with a civilian religious leader like Paul, I believe my brief study here offers a new and helpful approach to the ongoing debates about the significance of male circumcision for Judeans and their neighbors in the later Second Temple period.

MALE CIRCUMCISION

First of all, male circumcision was certainly not unique to Judeans, because we know from a variety of sources, both literary and archaeological,¹² that circumcision of different styles was practiced upon males—whether as infants, boys, or men—not

⁹ Neil Elliott, "Paul and the Politics of Empire," in Richard Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics: Ekklēsia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation*, Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000, 17-39, here 22 [emphasis his]. Elliott is quoting from John Barclay, "Neither Jew nor Greek: Multiculturalism and the New Perspective on Paul," in Mark G. Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible*, Leiden: Brill, 1996, 205 n. 27; in n. 27, Barclay, in commenting upon a quote from J.D.G. Dunn, refers to his own book where he first wrote of Jewish cultural imperialism: *Obedying the Truth: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988, 250-51.

¹⁰ Other books on this topic by the same editor include: Richard Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1997; Richard Horsley, ed., *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order*, Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2004; Richard Horsley, *Religion and Empire: People, Power and the Life of the Spirit*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.

¹¹ On conversion and circumcision, there is vast scholarship; for a start, see the scholarship mentioned in notes above of S. Cohen, L. Feldman, P. Frederickson, N. McEleney, as well as M. Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. Unlike most scholarship treating the topic of Paul and circumcision, I am not interested in approaching this topic from the question of «conversion» or how to define such a term. For an excellent, brief analysis of circumcision in the Diaspora, see J.M.G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, Berkeley: UC Press, 1996, 438-439. For Roman reaction to Judeans and their practice of circumcision, see especially J. Gager, *The Origins of Anti-semitism*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1985, 55-66.

¹² For illustrations and descriptions of archaeological evidence for circumcision in Egypt, see E. Bailey, "Circumcision in Ancient Egypt," *The Bulletin for the Australian Centre for Egyptology* 7 (1996) 15-28, and

only by Jews, but also, as the Greek historian Herodotus claims, by Egyptians,¹³ Ethiopians, Phoenicians and Syrians in Palestine, Syrians on the rivers Thermodon and Parthenius, Colchians, and Macronians.¹⁴ The Jewish prophet Jeremiah provides a slightly different list when he channels God's message with its Near Eastern focus: «The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I shall punish everyone circumcised in the flesh: of Egypt, Judah, Edom, the Ammonites, Moab, and all the desert dwellers who have the hair of their forehead clipped» (i.e. Arabs, also). (Jeremiah 9:24-5) Styles of circumcision could also vary: «Jewish circumcision involves pulling the foreskin forward and amputating it; the removal of the annular piece of skin permanently uncovers the glans. The Egyptian procedure involved either the excision of a triangular section from the dorsal face of the foreskin or simply a longitudinal incision along the median line of the dorsal face allowing retraction of the foreskin and exposure of the glans.»¹⁵

The fact that the practice is *not* unique to Jews is what makes Josephus' rebuttal of the Egyptian Apion's literary attack on Jews in the first century so pointed. After all, Josephus argues, how can Apion the Egyptian criticize other Judean customs when he knows that Egyptian priests not only are circumcised but also abstain from pork, and that Herodotus¹⁶ himself said that Egyptians taught others how to do circumcision? (*C.A.* 2.140-142) Josephus concludes his entire response to Apion by reporting the ultimate ironic comeuppance for someone who blasphemes against Jewish laws: Apion supposedly «was circumcised out of necessity» (*C.A.* 2.143: «περιετμήθη γὰρ ἐξ ἀνάγκης») because there was an ulceration on his private parts, and after he was not helped at all by the circumcision, he instead discharged pus and died in terrible pain. Too bad that Apion had not heeded the Jewish advice available right there in Alexandria and recorded by Philo, who says that the first reason to perform circumcision is to prevent ἄνθραξ, the Greek term for pustule or

M. Spigelman, "The Circumcision Scene in the Tomb of Ankhmahor: The First Record of Emergency Surgery?" *BACE* 8 (1997) 91-101.

¹³ Philo, *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesin*, III, 47, when discussing Genesis 17:11, says Egyptians circumcised both males and females at puberty. (I simply do not know whether females were circumcised or not by the other nations listed by Herodotus and Jeremiah, as they are in some nations today.) Here Philo explains why only men are circumcised and not females, too: because men have a stronger sex drive and need to have their pride repressed since they do the most in procreation.

¹⁴ Herodotus 2.104; Phoenicians did not practice circumcision at this time, and it is hard to know about some of the others, too, such as the Macronians.

¹⁵ R. Steiner, "Incomplete Circumcision in Egypt and Edom: Jeremiah (9:24-25) in the Light of Josephus and Jonckheere," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 118 (1999) 497-505, here 503. For a more intricate description of Hebrew *milah* (cutting off the foreskin) and *periah* (tearing away leftover skin with fingernails to reveal corona), see S. Cohen, "Between Judaism and Christianity: The Semicircumcision of Christians according to Bernard Gui, his Sources and R. Eliezer of Metz," *HTR* (2001) 307-8.

¹⁶ Herodotus 2.36-7, 104. With a truly Hellenic aesthetic sensibility, Herodotus 2.37 reports that «Egyptians circumcise their genitals for the sake of cleanliness, preferring to be clean rather than good-looking.»

ulcer.¹⁷ The Egyptian Apion bites the dust ironically and painfully because of circumcision—case closed almost humorously and definitely righteously for Josephus the Judean priest.

But if Judeans are not unique in practicing circumcision, in what way did they believe it made them members of a special Judean group? The source for this is found in their scriptures in Genesis 17,¹⁸ where God appears to Abram at the age of 99 and announces that He is making a covenant with the man: Abram will be father of many nations and kings and receive a new name Abraham; this covenant will be everlasting with all his descendants; He will be their God; and the «whole land of Canaan» will be an everlasting possession for Abraham and his descendants. The «sign» of this covenant will be the circumcision of every male, and whether born in the household or purchased with money, they must be circumcised. God also warns that «any uncircumcised male who has not been circumcised in the flesh will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.» (Gen. 17:14) The deal is pretty clear: Abraham will have everlasting descendants *and* Canaan as a land for them as long as they circumcise their entire male population, *including their slaves*. The added bonus is that God promises that Abraham's wife, newly named Sarah, will soon have a son named Isaac, who will be the son with whom God plans to establish this covenant, leaving Abraham's already existing son Ishmael (by the Egyptian handmaiden Hagar) to become the proud father of 12 princes and many descendants (who will be the northern Arabian tribes); Ishmael and his descendants will be excluded from this covenant, and, therefore, have no claim to the land of Canaan. (Gen. 17:19-21) Ever-obedient Abraham promptly circumcises his entire household, including his thirteen-year-old son Ishmael. Age is no issue for circumcision of those being incorporated into this covenant, but under the rules, in the future all male babies born into the covenant (i.e. Isaac and his descendants) should be circumcised on the eighth day. Despite being circumcised, Ishmael holds no claim to the covenant's main tangible reward, the land of Canaan. Circumcision, therefore, is not automatically a sign of belonging to God's people of the covenant, but circumcision along with descent from Abraham's son Isaac is, according to Genesis. Isaac will be the father of Jacob, whom God renames Israel. (Gen. 32: 28)

From the time of the exodus from Egypt to the Kingdom of Israel, the Hebrew scriptures report three main occasions when male circumcision comes into play

¹⁷ See Philo, *De Specialibus Legibus*, I, 2-11 on six good reasons to perform it: 1) to prevent *anthrax*, 2) cleanliness, 3) resemblance of foreskin to heart, 4) to allow maximum fertility, 5) excision of pleasure, and 6) to discard vain opinion of soul that deifies self instead of God. J.M.G. Barclay, "Paul and Philo on Circumcision: Romans 2.25-9 in Social and Cultural Context," *New Testament Studies* 44.4 (1998) 536-556 rightly disputes Boyarin's interpretation of Philo and Paul on circumcision found in *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, Berkeley: UC Press, 1994.

¹⁸ The date of the composition of this passage is highly debatable, but this is not a problem for my argument, because the text was clearly part of the Hebrew canon, as witnessed in the Septuagint, by the second century BCE.

historically:¹⁹ 1) when Moses' wife Zipporah circumcises their own son and then touches Moses' genitals with the foreskin in order to prevent God from killing Moses before he leads the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 4:24-26); 2) when Joshua orders all the Israelites males to be circumcised after they have been wandering for forty years on their journey out of Egypt so that they might return back to the promised land (Joshua 5:1-9); and 3) when King Saul tells David to collect 100 foreskins from the Philistines in order to gain his daughter Michal's hand in marriage. David doubles the order by bringing back 200 foreskins, and he then «counted them out before the king so that he could be the king's son-in-law.» (1Samuel 18:27) In each of these cases circumcision is a prelude to the great man stepping forward and fulfilling his destiny on behalf of the people of Israel, *especially in connection with them gaining control of or expanding their land.*

THE HASMONEAN CONQUESTS AND FORCED CIRCUMCISION

Centuries after their return from Egypt, however, the descendants of Isaac eventually did lose their land, and the Hebrew scriptures are careful to explain that this occurred only because these descendants of Isaac have failed to keep up their end of the bargain by repeatedly breaking the law given to Moses. First the northern Kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians in the 730s-20s BCE. Then, after the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah in the 580s BCE by the army of Nebuchadnezzar, the Israelites or Hebrews, who become known as Judeans after their return from the Babylonian exile, do not again have autonomous, sovereign rule over even a portion of their land of Canaan until the aftermath of the Maccabean revolt in the 160s BCE against the hellenizing Seleucid King Antiochus IV Epiphanes.²⁰ The Jewish history 1 Maccabees reports that this Greek king not only had ordered that his entire kingdom, including the towns of Judea, take up unified pagan rituals and abandon local customs like the Sabbath observance in Judea, but also then desecrated the second Jewish temple at Jerusalem by converting it into a temple of Olympian Zeus (or Baal

¹⁹ I am not examining other metaphorical material. For a more comprehensive listing, see M. Chebel, *Histoire de la circoncision: Des origines à nos jours*, Tunisia: Cérés Productions, 1993, especially 161-169 for excerpts from relevant Jewish and Christian texts; my thanks to Dr. Pedro de Montaner for providing me with a copy of this book. For a cultural construction approach to circumcision in ancient Israel, see J. Berquist, *Controlling Corporeality: The Body and the Household in Ancient Israel*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002, especially 35-40.

²⁰ See F. Millar, "The Background to the Maccabean Revolution: Reflections on Martin Hengel's 'Judaism and Hellenism,'" *Journal of Jewish Studies* 29 (1978), 1-21, and p. 20: «However difficult it may be to accommodate it within our normal views of Hellenistic rule in Asia, the evidence, both Jewish and pagan, asserts that the programme of forced conversion to Hellenism (or paganism) was that of Antiochus, and was carried out by his agents.»

Shamen) by erecting above the temple's altar objects known to the Judeans as the «abomination of desolation.» (1 Macc. 1:41-57, cf. Daniel 9:27, 11:31) Among other punishments, «They put to death according to the edict women who had circumcised their children, and they hung their babies from their necks,²¹ and [they also executed] their male household members²² and the men who had circumcised them.» (1 Macc.1:61) This harsh treatment fuels a nationalistic response that eventually results in the creation of a new Judean kingdom.

The patriotic Judean text 1 Maccabees then describes how in the early stage of the revolt against Greek rule and Judean collaborators, a priest named Mattathias and his men formed an armed force to combat «sinners» and «renegades,» i.e. anyone openly sympathetic or showing allegiance to the Greek side. (1 Macc. 2:39-48) According to the account, «Mattathias and his friends went around and destroyed the altars and circumcised the young boys who were uncircumcised, as many as they found within the boundaries²³ of Israel, with force.» (1 Macc. 2:45-46) Following the logic of the text, this was clearly in response to the previously described royal edict, which had wiped out Judean customs. After all, Mattathias the priest and his friends and family must have reasoned, how can God's covenant be valid if there are male descendants of Isaac residing within Canaan/Israel who do not possess the sign of that key covenant with Abraham? Furthermore, note that even if Mattathias and his men were circumcising only the descendants of Isaac, they did use «force,» which strongly indicates that not every child or parent wanted this to be done, possibly out of fear of later Greek reprisals against the children and their families should the Greeks quell the revolt. This revolt against Greek rule, however, turned out to be successful and was led after the death of Mattathias by his son Judas, nicknamed Maccabeus. Eventually, there was an independent Judean state for approximately eighty years under the priesthood and then kingship of Judas' descendants, who became known as Hasmoneans after an ancestor Asamoneus.²⁴

²¹ It is notable that the mothers are being singled out specifically for circumcising their babies, like Moses' wife Zipporah.

²² «τοὺς οἴκους» can be the household goods one owns [LSJ II], in this case male slaves, who are considered part of the οἶκος, family [LSJ III].

²³ The Stuttgart Septuagint's editor A. Rahlfs has chosen the reading «ὁρίοις» ([in the] 'boundaries'), which is found in the main mss. B and A, over the Codex Sinaiticus' (S) «υἱοίς» ('sons'), which is only found at the most in not more than one minuscule ms. I, therefore, cannot see why S. Weitzman, "Forced Circumcision and the Shifting Role of Gentiles in Hasmonean Ideology," *HTR* 92.1 (1999) 45 uses S's less well-attested reading, which Rahlf rejected, as the launching point for an entire argument that Mattathias and his men did not forcibly circumcise non-Jews within Israel. It would have made more sense for Weitzman not to rely on an inferior ms. reading, which reflects a later interpretation, but instead to read 1 Macc. 2:44 as showing that Mattathias and his men were targeting Judeans who had left the Law, including those who had the temerity to flee to pagans for safety. This is intra-Judean strife on behalf of the Law (1 Macc. 2:48), but of course, in complete defiance of the king's edict, and therefore, a major act of resistance against him.

²⁴ Josephus, *B.J.* 1.19.

Several ancient accounts tell how the Hasmonean leaders John Hyrcanus (ruled 135-104 BCE) and Aristobulus (ruled 104-103 BCE) used circumcision on the people of Idumea²⁵ to the south and Iturea to the north in order to incorporate them and their land into the kingdom of Judea.²⁶ Furthermore, Josephus mentions that King Alexander Jannaeus (ruled 103-76 BCE), after conquering numerous cities, had the city of Pella, just east of the River Jordan, demolished for refusing to take on Jewish customs, which would have included male circumcision.

ON JOHN HYRCANUS (RULED 135-104) AND THE IDUMEANS

Josephus, *Ant.* 13.257-8:²⁷

Hyrcanus also captured Adora and Marisa, cities of Idumea, and allowed all the subdued Idumeans *to remain in their country if they would circumcise their genitals and would wish to use the Judean laws. And they out of a keen desire for their land of their fathers submitted to make both their circumcision and the rest of their way of life the same as [it was] for Judeans. And from that time on they were Judeans.*

Ptolemy, *On Herod the King* (a fragment, in Stern #146):²⁸

Judaeans and Idumaeans differ, as Ptolemy states in the first book of his ‘On Herod the King.’ Judaeans are those who are so originally and by nature. The Idumaeans, on the other hand, were not Judaeans originally but Phoenicians and Syrians; having been subjugated by them [the Judaeans] and *compelled to be circumcised*, to contribute (taxes) to the nation, and to follow the same laws, they were called Judaeans.

²⁵ Goodman (1994) 77, remarks: «In any case the area inhabited by Idumaeans by the 120s BCE was north of biblical Edom and in fact lay within the southern part of the old kingdom of Judah.»

²⁶ See D. Mendels, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism*, New York: Doubleday, 1992, ch. 4 on “The Concept of Territory: Borders and Boundaries (200-63 B.C.E.),” 81-105, for a clear explanation of the difficulty of identifying—and the changing notions of—boundaries during the period in question. For excellent maps of the Hasmonean land acquisitions, see Kasher (1988) *passim*.

²⁷ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.257-8: «Υρκανός δὲ καὶ τῆς Ἰδουμαίας αἰρεῖ πόλεις Ἀδωρα καὶ Μάρισαν, καὶ ἅπαντας τοὺς Ἰδουμαίους ὑπὸ χεῖρα ποιησάμενος ἐπέτρεψεν αὐτοῖς μένειν ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ, εἰ περιτέμνονται τὰ αἰδοῖα καὶ τοῖς Ἰουδαίων νόμοις χρήσασθαι θέλοιεν. [258] οἱ δὲ πόθῳ τῆς πατρῴου γῆς καὶ τὴν περιτομὴν καὶ τὴν ἄλλην τοῦ βίου δίαίταν ὑπέμειναν τὴν αὐτὴν Ἰουδαίοις ποιήσασθαι. κἀκείνοις αὐτοῖς χρόνος ὑπῆρχεν ὥστε εἶναι τὸ λοιπὸν Ἰουδαίους.»

²⁸ Ptolemy, whose book is otherwise lost, was Herod the Great’s chief financial minister. The Greek and translation are from M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, vol. 1, Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974, 356: «Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ Ἰδουμαῖοι διαφέρουσιν, ὡς φησι Πτολεμαῖος ἐν πρώτῳ Περὶ Ἡρώδου τοῦ βασιλέως. Ἰουδαῖοι μὲν γὰρ εἰσιν οἱ ἐξ ἀρχῆς φυσικοί·

Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.34 (Stern #115):²⁹

The Idumaeans are Nabataeans, but owing to a sedition they were banished from there, joined the Judeans, and shared in the same customs with them.

ON ARISTOBULUS (R. 104-103) AND THE ITUREANS

Josephus, *Ant.* 13.318-319, which also contains a quote from Strabo, who is quoting Timagenes:³⁰

Having been king for one year, and having taken the title ‘friend of the Greeks,’ he performed many services for his country; he went to war against the Itureans, and added much of their land to Judea, and *he forced the inhabitants, if they wanted to stay in their country, both to be circumcised and to live according to the laws of the Judeans.* He was by nature reasonable, and he was also very modest, as Strabo also attests to this quoting Timagenes thus: ‘This man was both reasonable and very helpful to the Judeans, for he both gained land for them and claimed this portion of the nation of the Itureans as their own,³¹ *after he had bound [them to them] by the circumcision of their genitals as bondage/a bond.*³²’

²⁹ Ἰδουμαῖοι δὲ τὸ μὲν ἀρχῆθεν οὐκ Ἰουδαῖοι, ἀλλὰ Φοίνικες καὶ Σύροι, κρατηθέντες δὲ ὑπ’ αὐτῶν καὶ ἀναγκασθέντες περιτέμνεσθαι καὶ συντελεῖν εἰς τὸ ἔθνος καὶ τὰ αὐτὰ νόμιμα ἠγγεῖσθαι ἐκλήθησαν Ἰουδαῖοι.»

²⁹ Ibid., 294 and 299: «Ναβαταῖοι δ’ εἰσὶν οἱ Ἰδουμαῖοι· κατὰ στάσις δ’ ἐκπέσοντες ἐκείθεν προσχώρησαν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις καὶ τῶν νομίμων τῶν αὐτῶν ἐκείνοις ἐκοινώνησαν.»

³⁰ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.318-319: «...βασιλεύσας ἐνιαυτὸν, χρηματίσας μὲν Φιλέλλην, πολλὰ δ’ εὐεργετήσας τὴν πατρίδα, πολεμήσας Ἰτουραίους καὶ πολλὴν αὐτῶν τῆς χώρας τῆ Ἰουδαία προσκτησάμενος ἀναγκάσας τε τοὺς ἐνοικοῦντας, εἰ βούλονται μένειν ἐν τῇ χώρᾳ, περιτέμνεσθαι καὶ κατὰ τοὺς Ἰουδαίων νόμους ζῆν. [319] φύσει δ’ ἐπιεικὴν κέχρητο καὶ σφόδρα ἦν αἰδοῦς ἤττων, ὡς μαρτυρεῖ τούτῳ καὶ Στράβων ἐκ τοῦ Τιμαγένους ὀνόματος λέγων οὕτως· ἐπιεικῆς τε ἐγένετο οὗτος ὁ ἀνὴρ καὶ πολλὰ τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις χρήσιμος· χώραν τε γὰρ αὐτοῖς προσεκτίσαστο καὶ τὸ μέρος τοῦ τῶν Ἰτουραίων ἔθνος ὠκειώσαστο δεσμῶ συνάψας τῇ τῶν αἰδοίων περιτομῇ.»

³¹ I am taking this verb «ὠκειώσαστο» in the sense of LSJ II.2 (for middle voice) «make or claim as one’s own, appropriate.» Herodotus uses the verb for Persia in relation to Asia and «the barbarous nations dwelling in it» (1.4); surely this is not purely a friendly relationship but one crafted through Persian military supremacy. Cohen (1999) 112 offers milder, friendlier translations of: «brought them over,» «won them over,» «established friendship with them,» or «established kinship with them.» K.H. Rengstorff, *A Complete Concordance to Flavius Josephus*, vol. 3, Leiden: Brill, 1979, 175, however, is far more blatant in his rendering of the word here in *Ant.* 13.319 as «to affiliate (annex),» and in the German, «zum Anschluß bringen.» Translation is definitely a form of interpretation, often reflecting one’s own culture as much as the one from which the text comes.

³² δεσμός in the singular can mean both.

ON ALEXANDER JANNEUS (R. 104-78 BCE) AND PELLA

Josephus, *Ant.* 13.397:³³

...this last city [Pella] Alexander's men demolished because the inhabitants would not agree to adopt the national customs of the Jews.

Joseph Sievers has argued that the account of circumcision by force in 1 Macc. 2:46 was in fact composed towards the end of the second century BCE to justify the later policy of forced circumcision employed by the Hasmonean leader John Hyrcanus in his conquest of the neighboring land of Idumea.³⁴ Steven Weitzman rejects Sievers' argument by instead showing that 1 Macc. was not written to support the incorporation of Gentiles into Israel, but only people who were Judean but had left the Law.³⁵ I honestly think both scholars are partially correct: Sievers in seeing that the account of the deeds of Mattathias in 1 Macc. was colored by the historical interpretation of the deeds of his descendant John Hyrcanus «in the boundaries of Israel,»³⁶ and Weitzman in contending that Mattathias and his men «imposed circumcision on Jews as part of an effort to resegregate them from Gentiles.»³⁷ Weitzman also sees an evolution of this practice of forced circumcision in that «while Mattathias had imposed circumcision on Jews, Hyrcanus and his successors extended this practice to Gentiles under their control.»³⁸ Though he is not the first to do so, Weitzman sensibly argues that the Hasmoneans saw the need for employing non-Jews for political and military manpower, and in order to create «legitimacy in the eyes of Jews» they were «disguising the absorption of local non-Jews as a continuation of the Maccabean drive to retake the land for Judaism.»³⁹ Because of the tensions involved, the various ancient accounts of these episodes of Hasmonean forced circumcisions differ in the details they present, «thus masking Idumean and Iturean complicity or simplifying a complex process of cultural coa-

³³ Josephus, *Ant.* 13.395-7: «Κατὰ δὴ τοῦτον τὸν καιρὸν ἤδη τῶν Σύρων καὶ Ἰδουμαίων καὶ Φοινίκων πόλεις εἶχον οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι πρὸς θαλάσση μὲν Στράτωνος πύργον Ἀπολλωνίαν Ἰόππην Ἰάμνειαν Ἄζωτον Γάζαν Ἀθηδὸνα Ῥάφειαν Ῥινοκόρουρα, [396] ἐν δὲ τῇ μεσογαίᾳ κατὰ τὴν Ἰδουμαίαν Ἀδωρα καὶ Μάρισαν καὶ ὅλην Ἰδουμαίαν, Σαμάρειαν Καρμηλίον ὄρος καὶ τὸ Ἰταβύριον ὄρος Σκυθόπολιν Γάδαρα, Γαυλανίτιδας Σελεύκειαν Γάβαλα, [397] Μωαβίτιδας Ἡσεβῶν Μήδαβα Λεμβὰ Ὀρωναιμαγελεθων Ζόαρα Κιλικῶν αὐλῶνα Πέλλαν, ταύτην κατέσκαψεν οὐχ ὑποσχομένων τῶν ἐνοικούντων ἐς πάτρια τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἔθνη μεταβαλεῖσθαι, ἄλλας τε πόλεις πρωτεύουσας τῆς Συρίας ἦσαν κατεστραμμένοι.»

³⁴ J. Sievers, *The Hasmoneans and Their Supporters*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990.

³⁵ Weitzman (1999) 45.

³⁶ Sievers is right to see the land of Israel as a key component, but I agree with Weitzman that in 1 Macc. the circumcision is being performed on Jewish, not gentile, boys.

³⁷ Weitzman (1999) 51.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 58

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 58.

lescence.»⁴⁰ One can see, then, that it was not acceptable to the existing Judean population and/or its rulers to have resident aliens serving in the government or army, despite Jewish law allowing non-Judeans to live among them.⁴¹ This shows that the Hasmoneans in one sense were treating the conquered neighboring people potentially like slaves (which makes sense given that they were defeated in warfare) by requiring circumcision, as they would of any slave of a Judean, but legally as free people with the benefits of Judean citizenship, if they complied. If not, they had to leave this newly extended land of Israel.⁴²

To these arguments I would also add that Richard Steiner, with the help of Louis Feldman, has recently read the Greek in the Josephus passage on John Hyrcanus properly (*Ant.* 13.258), and, therefore, sees that the text «indicates that ‘to make/do the same as the Jews’ applies equally to circumcision and the rest of their way of life. Both are to be *modified*, not *introduced*.»⁴³ According to the Jeremiah passage quoted above, the Idumeans, or people of Edom, were already «circumcised in the flesh,» and according to Herodotus, so were the «Syrians of Palestine.» The

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 59. Weitzman posits Idumean and Iturean complicity in the Hasmonean campaign of circumcising all residents of these newly conquered lands; Kasher (1988) 55, n. 32 lists the scholars who had contended this previously. Kasher, however, is possibly wrong to assert on 75 that the reports in Josephus stem from anti-Hasmonean propaganda, yet T. Rajak seems to follow him in «The Hasmoneans and the uses of Hellenism,» in P.R. Davies and R.T. White, eds., *A Tribute to Geza Vermes*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, reprinted in T. Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome*, Leiden: Brill, 2001, 75. Weitzman sees that Kasher may be wrong, but does not show adequately why. Furthermore, we should remember that Josephus boasts of his descent from the Hasmoneans, and he would have hardly reported this if he considered it shameful, whatever his own behavior was during the war; in Josephus’ texts, the Hasmonean John Hyrcanus is a hero for his own day, and Josephus himself is a hero for new circumstances involving the Romans. S. Cohen (1987 and 1999) also examines all the evidence.

⁴¹ On Jewish law allowing non-Judeans to live among them, see T. Martin, “The Covenant of Circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14) and the Situational Antitheses in Galatians 3:28,” *JBL* 122.1 (2003) 118 and his list of citations for such people: Lev. 16:29, 17:10, 19:10, 24:16; Deut. 14:21, 24:14. As Martin says, «The day laborer may work in the household business alongside the slaves but is not required as a free person to submit to circumcision unless he desires to participate in the Passover meal (Exod 12:45, 48; Num 9:14).»

⁴² Goodman (1994) 75-77 offers a counterweight to Kasher’s and Cohen’s arguments about the Hasmonean conquests; Goodman, however, does not address the issue of deportation. For an excellent analysis of the meager finds in the archaeological record in Galilee before the Hasmonean settlement there, see J. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus*, Harrisburg: Trinity, 2000, especially 34-43. Reed presents a stark summary of «destruction or abandonment of gentile sites between Judea and Galilee, and on Galilee’s periphery» on 42-43. He concludes on 43: «The increase of sites in Galilee during the Late Hellenistic Period and the introduction of Hasmonean coinage there testify to the economic and political connections between Galilee and Jerusalem.» Furthermore, Adam Porter (in his abstract from the program book for the International Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, 2003, 71) has argued that Perea had much previously been depopulated after the Assyrian campaigns of the 8th century, but then repopulated by Judeans after the Babylonian exile; thus «Peraea became an important locus for Judean expansion before the Hasmonean period.» Porter concludes his abstract: «If we follow Shaye Cohen’s definition of ‘Jewish’—that it was a geographic or ethnic term before the Hasmonean period—the settlement of Peraea by Jews may comprise an interesting parallel to the settlement by the Hasmoneans of Galilee.»

⁴³ Steiner (1999) 504, n. 27.

Idumeans, Itureans, as well as possibly some of the inhabitants of Moab conquered by Alexander Janneus,⁴⁴ therefore, were receiving a touch-up circumcision, so to speak, in order to conform to the Judean type of complete, circular circumcision, which exposes the entire glans.

Furthermore, we should acknowledge that Shaye Cohen is right in emphasizing the novelty of forced circumcision during the reigns of these Hasmoneans.⁴⁵ Cohen cogently points out that the Hasmoneans were trying to create a πολιτεία, or government, along the lines of other Hellenistic efforts at state-building. Cohen takes into account not only Josephus but also the evidence provided by other non-Judean ancient historians, Ptolemy and Strabo, the latter of whom Cohen says presents the incorporation of Idumeans and Itureans as «voluntary.»⁴⁶ By shifting the balance towards Strabo's accounts, Cohen concludes: «Thus the rural Idumaeans joined the Judaeans on their own initiative, the citizens of Adora and Marisa joined the Judaeans at the threat of expulsion, and the Ituraeans joined the Judaeans at the initiative of the ruler of the Judaeans. None of these groups became ethnic Judaeans. Insofar as they became citizens in a state dominated by the Judaeans, they became Judaeans themselves in a political sense, and obligated themselves to observe the ways of the Judaeans.»⁴⁷ I do think Cohen puts too much weight on Strabo's more neutral notices in contrast to both Ptolemy's and Josephus' testimony. Furthermore, it is very difficult not to see compulsion involved when deportation from one's ancestral home is the alternative. While some residents of Adora and Marisa seem to have relocated to Egypt, most of the conquered people chose to stay in their homelands (and presumably to keep their land and property, though this is not specifically mentioned) for the price of submitting to Judean laws and customs.

PAUL AND FORCED CIRCUMCISION

The history and results of the Hasmonean conquests and spread of Judean laws and customs into Idumea, Iturea, and other areas were known and recorded by the first century. James D.G. Dunn has explained:

⁴⁴ See *Ant.* 13.395-397 and 14.18 for lists of places conquered.

⁴⁵ S. Cohen (1999), chapter 4, contains an excellent analysis of newness of this practice. In *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987, 52, Cohen argues on circumcision that «the Bible as a whole generally ignores it and nowhere regards it as the essential mark of Jewish identity or as the sine qua non for membership in the Jewish polity. It attained this status only in Maccabean times.»

⁴⁶ Strabo, *Geography* 16.2.34, on the Idumeans, quoted above. Kasher (1988) argues that it was not forced and thinks this is all anti-Hasmonean propaganda; Feldman (1993) combats this. Also see Goodman (1994) who rightly discounts Kasher's argument. Weitzman (1999) disagrees with Kasher on his anti-Hasmonean propaganda theory, also.

⁴⁷ Cohen (1999) 118 concludes: «The glue that held this union together was common hatred of 'the Greeks' and the readiness of these nations to adopt the way of life and name of the Judeans.» This is close to Kasher's reasoning. Note to the contrary that Josephus reports that Aristobulus used the title «Philhellene» (*Ant.* 13.318).

Galatians itself does not explain why circumcision was such a crucial concern for the other missionaries. But the reason becomes immediately apparent when we set the text in its primary historical context. For, as already noted in chapter 1, circumcision lay at the heart of Jewish identity, so much so that Jews as a people could be identified simply as ‘the circumcision’ (2.7, 9; similarly Rom. 3.30; 4.9; Col. 3.11)...Two centuries before Paul the importance of circumcision as Israel’s essential identity marker had been massively reinforced by the Maccabean crisis...and the Maccabean defense of Judaism consequently had included among its first priorities the reassertion of circumcision as indispensable for all Jews (1 Macc. 2.46). Thus for the great bulk of Jews, the link between ‘Jew’, ‘Judaism’ and circumcision was axiomatic; an uncircumcised Jew was virtually a contradiction in terms....All this would probably have been so self-evident to the other missionaries that Paul’s neglect of circumcision and objection to their requirement of it must have caused them some puzzlement.⁴⁸

Dunn, therefore, concludes that Paul and his contemporaries knew of the Maccabean use of circumcision. S.A. Cummins, building upon Dunn and others, devotes an entire book to «Maccabean martyrdom» as a backdrop for understanding Paul’s depiction of the ‘Antioch Incident’ in Galatians 2.⁴⁹

Certainly this Hasmonean history, then, would have been known to a Jewish man like Paul, who, though raised in Tarsus in Asia Minor, spent time in Judea, Syria, and even «Arabia» according to his own personal résumé provided in Galatians 1-2.⁵⁰ It is, therefore, surprising that previous scholars have not made a *direct and explanatory* link between the Judean nationalistic and imperialistic past and Paul’s own stand against mandatory circumcision, whether voluntary or forced, in the early Christian movement.⁵¹ Perhaps scholars do not make this kind of connection because in his letters Paul does not discuss recent Judean history nor was he a Judean military leader. One possible reason for Paul’s silence on the Judean past of the last two centuries could be that he realized that Judean local history really

⁴⁸ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 30-31; Dunn argues that Paul replaces circumcision with the cross of Christ.

⁴⁹ S.A. Cummins, *Paul and the Crucified Christ in Antioch: Maccabean Martyrdom and Galatians 1 and 2*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

⁵⁰ See also another résumé on his Jewishness at Philip. 3:5-6, where he specifies among other things that he was circumcised on the eighth day.

⁵¹ P. Fredriksen (1991) 560 n. 72 comes closest when she analyzes the verb ἀναγκάζειν, but she makes no direct connection between Paul’s reasoning and his understanding of recent Judean history; instead she sees him changing biblical history (561) for his new purpose. On 559, Fredriksen states in relation to Galatians 2: «In light of our review of Jewish beliefs and practices, however, we know the opposite to be the case: these men, the ‘false brethren,’ were actually proposing a startling novelty both within the Judaism and, *a fortiori*, within the Christian movement.» Cohen (1987) mentions Gal. 2:14 on use of the verb ἰουδαίξειν, but otherwise here does not discuss Paul and circumcision; Cohen (1999) 175-197 offers an excellent survey of the verb ἰουδαίξειν (including in Paul and Josephus), starting with other Greek –ίξειν verbs.

would have not meant much to his far-flung gentile (and possibly even Judean) audiences in Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome; in fact, he seems deliberately to avoid discussion of Judean political history of the last two centuries. Furthermore, Paul neither had the personal power nor does he display any interest whatsoever in building an empire defined by land and citizenship under Hasmonean-style Judean rulers. Instead, Paul concentrates in his letters on the distant past and the patriarchs found in the Hebrew scriptures in order to create a new typology for a new movement branching off of its more ancient Judean roots.⁵²

Nevertheless, though he does not talk about John Hyrcanus, Aristobulus, or Alexander Janneus, Paul, as Dunn makes clear, certainly must have known that Idumeans, Itureans, and others who had formerly been considered Gentiles and then had become Judeans through circumcision and observance of the Law. He would have been terribly unread and ignorant not to know this—even the average person on the street would have known that some people years before had been prejudiced against King Herod the Great (who died ca. 4 BCE) because he was an Idumean Jew, and used the slur «ἡμιϊουδαῖος» or «half-Judean» that we find reported in Josephus.⁵³ Paul would have certainly known how Herod with his Idumean background could be labeled a half-Judean. Paul even spoke personally to Herod's great-grandson, King Agrippa II, in a hearing before being sent to Rome. After Paul defends himself, the Roman procurator of Judea, Festus (60-62 CE), shouts, «Paul, you're crazy! All that book-learning has made you crazy!» (Acts 26:24) I would, therefore, argue, though admittedly through circumstantial evidence, that Paul knew main events in recent Judean history, including the conquests and subsequent circumcision of conquered peoples so that they could legally live as citizens in the Judean state.

Paul and his contemporaries, therefore, had a perfectly workable historical model from the Hasmoneans for incorporating non-Judeans, i.e. Gentiles, by male circumcision and observance of laws and customs into any version of Israel being promoted. Paul's Israel,⁵⁴ however, was not a state connected to any particular land or ethnicity but a community based on the belief that the Judean messiah Jesus had already

⁵² Fredriksen (1991): a new history because the end times had not come right away. In many respects, Acts (written about 30 years after Paul's letters) fulfills the Christian audience's evolving need for a new history that accounted for Paul's mission within a more recent historical context. Paul certainly does refer to contemporary people, places, and issues, but by writing letters, he does not use the generic forms of Judean or Greco-Roman historiography to explain his own actions; this makes Paul appear more like Cicero than Caesar or Josephus. Yet Paul, unlike Cicero, never seems to have asked anyone to write a full-scale history of his accomplishments within the movement; this request seems to have been made to the author of Luke-Acts by the enigmatic Theophilus.

⁵³ *Ant.* 14.403, in the words of Antigonus, one of the last Hasmoneans, against Herod. See P. Richardson, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1996) for his clever opening (on 1) and then his more standard scholarly approach on this issue on 52 ff.

⁵⁴ For Paul's "Israel of God" in Galatians 6:16, see J. Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, New York: Doubleday, 1997, 574 ff.

been in the land, had died on the cross, and then had risen from the dead for the salvation of all people who had received grace and believed this message. So why did Paul reject the old Hasmonean model? I propose that Paul had absolutely no interest in the practices of Judean nationalism and empire-building, which included land acquisition and allowing people to remain free and to be incorporated into the community only as long as they observed Jewish law, including male circumcision. Though some scholars when considering Paul's views on empire pitch the question in terms of his acceptance or rejection of the *Roman* empire and its *modus operandi*,⁵⁵ I think that in the matter of circumcision at least, the wisest place to look for an authority or precedent that Paul would accept or reject is the *Judean* kingdom—one that no longer existed in reality since the Romans had control of most of Israel at this time (though their client King Agrippa II did rule a northeastern portion of its remainder),⁵⁶ but whose memory still burned in the minds of many, inspiring messianic hopes in some and rebellion against Rome only a few years after Paul's arrest.⁵⁷

A main point of Paul's letter (dating to the 50s CE) to the Galatians in Asia Minor, who were non-Jews and believed in Christ, is that they should neither choose to undergo the procedure of circumcision nor submit to those Judeans in their midst who were pressuring them to do so in order to become members of the new faith community he has been helping to create.⁵⁸ On what grounds does Paul insist that

⁵⁵ For a very fine collection on this subject, especially for the Roman material (including essays by P. Brunt, D. Georgi, S. Price, P. Zanker, and P. Garnsey and R. Saller), read R. Horsley ed., *Paul and Empire*, Harrisburg: Trinity, 1997. Then turn to this volume's sequel, R. Horsley ed., *Paul and Politics*, Harrisburg: Trinity, 2000. In it Neil Elliott, "Paul and the Politics of Empire," 17-57, especially 33-35, states: «On these terms we could understand the Galatian controversy as the result of colonizing pressures and nativist counterpressures, rather than perpetuate a caricature of an aggressive and hypocritical Jewish proselytizing campaign as the necessary background to the letter.» In the same essay collection, R. Horsley, "Rhetoric and Empire—and 1 Corinthians," views Paul's writings in light of Roman imperial order, not the Judean of the past. Though M. Nanos' essay in the same collection, "The Inter- and Intra-Jewish Political Context of Paul's Letter to the Galatians," has a promising title, he does not really explain a Jewish political context beyond the narrow confines of the letters' disputants. S. Wan in "Collection for the Saints as an Anticolonial Act," 191-215 also sees Paul reacting to Roman imperialism: «My hypothesis is that Paul consciously pursued the collection as an ethnic Jew, a member of a minority group, a subaltern community under Roman rule. In Christ, the Jewish Messiah who had triumphed over all earthly and secular powers and potentates, he constructed a universalism along Jewish lines which in effect brought all Gentiles into the metanarrative of Israel. This new narrative stood in opposition to and criticism of all Roman imperial political, social, and cultural hegemonic forces, expressions, and institutions, including the patronage system....At the same time, while constructing a universalizing canopy of meanings along Jewish lines, Paul also resisted forces of cultural chauvinism,» p. 196; this last remark points to an understanding of the Judean background, but Wan does not explain it at all.

⁵⁶ As an appendix to his geographical description of Judea, Josephus adds the kingdom of Agrippa at *B.J.* 3.56-57; Josephus explains that this kingdom has a mixed population of Judeans and Syrians.

⁵⁷ See Kasher (1988) 75 ff. on the revival of Hasmonean ideology during the revolt.

⁵⁸ L. Ann Jervis, *New International Biblical Commentary: Galatians*, Peabody: Hendrikson, 1999, 128, on Gal. 5:2 comments: «Paul's warning not to be circumcised reads in the Greek as something that the Galatians are tempted to do but have not yet done.» I would say that the Greek definitely shows a future more vivid condition, but the present subjunctive («περιτέμνησθε») in the protasis indicates a continuing or incomplete action (vs. an aorist), as in: «if you keep being circumcised» (vs. «if you are circumcised»). The

Gentiles not be circumcised? Paul could have taken a pragmatic approach to the reasons he gives, stressing the daily cultural benefits of remaining uncircumcised, since for most living under Roman rule, circumcision would have been considered a barbaric, ugly, and distasteful mutilation of the male body.⁵⁹ After all, no circumcised man could have gone to the public bath, gymnasium, or latrine without being seen to lack a foreskin, unless he were to keep it covered or undergo a reversal operation known as epispasm.⁶⁰ Furthermore, there were medical risks involved in the procedure: as seen above, Josephus reported that Apion the Egyptian supposedly died of sepsis caused by his circumcision.⁶¹ In Galatians, however, Paul does not list any of these reasons for his stance against circumcision being performed on non-Judeans.

Instead, Paul blasts his Judean opponents there in Galatia as «false-brothers,» who are engaged in a quasi-war with him over this issue of circumcising non-Judeans.⁶² We should look now at a brief sketch of how he speaks of circumcision specifically throughout the letter,⁶³ while considering other motifs:⁶⁴

apodosis is in the future indicative (as opposed to the present indicative, as in a present general condition) because for Paul the future is what matters and should be totally focused on Christ, but for those who get circumcised, the future is not so bright: «Christ will be no help to you.» Furthermore, «again» («πάλιν») in the previous verse (Gal. 5:1) perhaps does not simply refer to the ancient past of slavery with Hagar or «Jerusalem now» (Gal. 4:25), but might indicate the repeated acts of «slavery» that occurred when Galatian men submitted to circumcision. T. Martin, “The Covenant of Circumcision (Genesis 17:9-14) and the Situational Antitheses in Galatians 3:28,” *JBL* 122 (2003) 111-125, especially 115, and n. 17, assumes that no one has been circumcised yet: «Paul’s failure to address a means of reintegrating the Galatians who have already submitted to circumcision strongly argues that none of the Galatians has become circumcised.» But there is no real proof of this in the letter, and, furthermore, if some men had already been circumcised, there would be absolutely no need for «reintegration» since by Paul’s logic this marker was irrelevant when discussing membership in his new Israel. I suspect that some men had already gone through with circumcision and that this increased the tension within the community of believers and prompted the heated rhetoric in this letter, especially at the beginning of chapter 3. After all, if some Anatolian men were willing to have themselves castrated in order become *galli*, attendants for the Mother of the Gods, how bad would circumcision really have seemed in comparison?

⁵⁹ For an excellent presentation of pagan views, and how in Roman times circumcision is perceived to be a Jewish trait, see Feldman (1993) 153 ff.

⁶⁰ Epispasm was available if a man decided to reverse the surgery; see R. Hall, “Epispasm: Circumcision in Reverse,” *Bible Review* 8 (1992) 52-57. Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:18 tells them not to worry about changing from either being circumcised or not.

⁶¹ Josephus, *C.A.* 2.143.

⁶² On Paul as an apostate from Judaism, see J.M.G. Barclay, “Deviance and Apostasy: Some applications of deviance theory to first-century Judaism and Christianity,” in P. Esler, ed., *Modelling Early Christianity*, London and New York: Routledge, 1995, 114-127, especially 122-123.

⁶³ In Paul we find the verb περιτέμνω at Gal 2:3, 5:2ff, 6:12ff; 1 Cor 7:18; Col. 2:11; and the noun περιτομή at Rom. 2:25-29, 3:1, 3:30, 4:9-12, 15:8; Gal. 2:7-9, 5:6, 5:11, 6:15; 1 Cor. 7:19; Col. 2:11, 3:11; Philip. 3:3, 3:5; Eph. 2:11. The opposite of being circumcised is having a foreskin, an ἀκροβυστία (a mixed Greek-semitic term; for Greeks it was ἀκροποσθία or ἀκροπόσθιον), found in Paul at Rom. 2:25-27, 3:30, 4:9-12; 1 Cor. 7:18-19; Gal. 2:75:6, 6:15; Col. 2:11, 2:13, 3:11; Eph. 2:11.

⁶⁴ For commentary, see J. Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, New York: Doubleday, 1997. Since I am not dealing in this article with the account in Acts of Paul’s actions as a main character, I shall not comment on Paul having Timothy circumcised in Acts 16:1-3; for this see S.

PARTIAL OUTLINE OF LETTER TO THE GALATIANS (LANGUAGE OF CIRCUMCISION AND IMPERIALISM IN ITALICS)

—Paul’s career as a Jew, how Paul became an apostle of Christ, and where he traveled (1:11-24):

1:16:

in order that I might preach the gospel [about] him among the Gentiles (nations)

—Paul faces other apostles 14 years later in Jerusalem and then in Antioch (chapter 2):

2:3-5:

But not even Titus, who was with me and was a Greek, was forced to be circumcised. But because of the *secretly introduced*⁶⁵ false-brothers who (being what they are) slipped in *to spy out our freedom*, which we have in Christ Jesus, so that *they might enslave us*—to them *we did not yield in submission* even for a moment,⁶⁶ so that the truth of the gospel might live on for you.

2:7:

Paul entrusted with «the gospel to the foreskin [i.e. the Gentiles], just as Peter [the gospel] to the *circumcision* [i.e. the Judeans]»

2:14

...I said to Cephas [Peter] in front of everyone, ‘If you are a Judean ethnically and yet in no way live like a Judean, *how can you force the nations [Gentiles] to behave like Judeans?*’

—On who are «sons of God» (with free vs. slave motif):⁶⁷

Cohen (1999) 363-377, where he argues that Timothy was not Jewish. Also, I am aware that Hung-Sik Choi has delivered a talk to the International Society of Biblical Literature meeting in July 2003, on “Salvific Efficacy of Circumcision: The Theological Rationale of the Galatian Agitators,” but from the title alone it does not appear that the presenter discussed the issue of Judean imperialism.

⁶⁵ παρεισάκτους—secretly introduced: LSJ 2 for verb παρεισάγω; Martyn (1997) cites Polybius for this.

⁶⁶ Martyn (1997) 197 n. 14 attests that «the weight of manuscript evidence favors this reading, for it is widely attested, except for D*.»

⁶⁷ Paul in Gal. 3:6-9 will use Abraham as an example of someone who shows faith *before* he receives the covenant marked by circumcision. Josephus will use the same Genesis material for a very different literary purpose—see my concluding paragraph.

3:28

there is not in [Christ] Judean nor Greek, there is not in [Christ] *slave nor free person*, there is not in [Christ] male and female.⁶⁸

—On freedom vs. slavery and circumcision:

5:1-2

For freedom Christ set us free; therefore, stand firm and don't be held again in the yoke of slavery. Look, I Paul say to you that *if you are circumcised, Christ will be of no help to you.*

5:6

For in Christ Jesus *neither circumcision nor a foreskin has any power but faith being effective*⁶⁹ through love.⁷⁰

5:11

But if I, brothers, am still preaching *circumcision*, why am I still being persecuted?

5:12-13

If only the ones who are upsetting you would go on and *have themselves castrated!*⁷¹ For you were called to *freedom*, brothers.

—Final Message (chapter 6):⁷²

6:12-15

Those who wish to make a good showing in flesh *are the ones forcing you to be circumcised*, only so that they may not be persecuted because of the cross of

⁶⁸ Judith Lieu, "Circumcision, Women, and Salvation," *NTS* 40 (1994) 358-370, cautions against embracing this as «the cornerstone of early Christian egalitarianism,» and argues that «the abolition of circumcision within the Christian church did not significantly change the status of women,» on 369.

⁶⁹ This verb ἐνεργέω is also used in the middle voice to describe troops and is the opposite of the verb in 5:4: «You are left idle away from Christ» [if you get circumcised].

⁷⁰ Martyn (1997) 518 points out that this antithesis with resolution also can be found at 6:15 and in 1 Cor. 7:19.

⁷¹ S. Elliott, "Choose Your Mother, Choose Your Master: Galatians 4:21-5:1 in the Shadow of the Anatolian Mother of the Gods," *JBL* 118 (1999) 661-683 argues for reading the preceding section on Hagar with an eye towards an audience in central Anatolia, where the Mother of the Gods (Cybele) and her *galli* (castrated δοῦλοι/slave functionaries) had a cult; Elliott makes an important point on 678-679 (and in Figure 3 on p. 680) with respect to circumcision: «With the implicit column from the Anatolian context in view, we can see that Paul presents circumcision as an act which will create a relationship to the law (Meter Sinaiene) analogous to the relationship that self-castration creates to the Mother of the Gods: slavery.»

⁷² See Philip F. Esler, "Group Boundaries and Intergroup Conflict in Galatians, in Mark G. Brett, ed., *Ethnicity and the Bible*, Leiden: Brill, 1996, 215-240, for a social-scientific approach to identity formation in Gal 5:13-6:10.

Christ. For *those being circumcised* do not themselves even keep the law, but *they wish you to be circumcised* so that they may boast in your flesh. But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our lord Jesus Christ, through whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. *For neither is circumcision anything nor [having a] foreskin, but a new creation [is something].*

Regarding the section on «false-brothers» in chapter 2, the commentator J. Louis Martyn observes, «Paul can count on his readers to grasp the sinister sense he intends.» It is more than this, though, since the whole sentence is shaping up to recount a secret spying mission in a war, and Martyn eventually does state:

Vis-à-vis the False Brothers, Paul was an uncompromising warrior. Even in the Jerusalem meeting the gospel thrusts its preachers not into a state of other-worldly peace, but rather into battle. In this battle Paul was triumphant. The False Brothers did not succeed in persuading the leaders of the Jerusalem church to take their position.⁷³

Martyn is right to see that this is «war,» but he does not grasp the bigger implication: battles among Judeans over people as turf, resulting in «slavery» and «subjection,» and requiring circumcision, is none other than a recollection or evocation of the old Hasmonean imperialistic dream and its demands upon newly subject peoples, but without a real army involved. Paul wants no part in this kind of imperialistic victory, where once free people become virtual slaves through physical conquest and then are given «freedom» predicated on the adoption of a new set of customs and laws.⁷⁴ S.A. Cummins sees the Maccabean context and draws the interesting comparison between this section and 2 Macc 8.1 on Judas Maccabeus secretly entering enemy territory as well as parallels between this and «Antiochus IV Epiphanes' efforts to compel the Maccabean martyrs to forsake their Torah food laws, and the Maccabees' enforced circumcision of apostate Jews.» He adds, «Paul now regards both forms of coercion as equally antipathetic to the gospel of Christ.»⁷⁵ What Martyn and Cummins do not discuss is the later Hasmonean imperialistic policy of circumcision forced upon *non-Judeans*, the very situation here in Galatia.

Furthermore, excluding anyone from this new Israel of believers in Christ because of a resistance to circumcision is the very Hasmonean policy of optional deportation from Israel that Paul wishes to avoid. He is not saying that circumcision is inherently evil or wrong—not at all. He instead wants his version of Israel, the «new foundation» (Gal. 6:15), free of this particular Judean nationalistic requirement that had been and now again was being made of non-Judeans. For as he states so succinctly in chapter 3,

⁷³ Martyn (1997) 197.

⁷⁴ This theme of circumcision leading to becoming «slaves of men» is found also in 1 Cor. 7:18-23.

⁷⁵ Cummins (2001) 131.

in his community of believers in Christ, «[there is] in [Christ] neither Judean nor Greek, nor in [Christ] slave or free person, nor in [Christ] male or female.» (Gal. 3:28) These antitheses may certainly be derived from a baptismal formula and from the covenant described in Genesis 17,⁷⁶ but they are terms that also make perfect sense in relation to the *remembered and then rejected* example from Judean history of creating a broader Israel by forcing circumcision upon newly conquered men.⁷⁷

JOSEPHUS AND FORCED CIRCUMCISION

This idea of forcing circumcision upon any man who wished to remain in Israel, whether a belief community or a place, was still very well known 15-20 years after Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians.⁷⁸ The Jewish historian Josephus attests to this in his *Judean War*, *Judean Antiquities*, and *Life*, all of which he wrote after being defeated as a Judean general in the war against the Romans that ran from 66-73 CE. The *Judean War* and the *Judean Antiquities* contain extensive descriptions of the history of the Hasmoneans, including the material on forced circumcision quoted above. In his autobiography Josephus claims that as general of the Judean forces in Galilee he rejected forced circumcision as a way of incorporating new members into his community composed of Jewish rebels fighting against the Romans:

⁷⁶ Martin (2003).

⁷⁷ J. Glancy, "Boasting of Beatings (2 Corinthians 11:23-25)," *JBL* 123.1 (2004) 99-135 makes a strong argument, concluding on 134 that though «display of war wounds was a common feature of Roman somatic rhetoric....in boasting of beatings, Paul does what he says he does: he boasts of things that show his weakness.» This is consistent with his rejection of Judean imperialistic tactics in Galatians.

⁷⁸ Perhaps we should also consider a fragment of [probably] Petronius' poetry from the 50s or early 60s CE as attestation to an elite Roman's perception of a man's exclusion from a Judean community on account of lacking circumcision. Petronius writes: «*Judaeus licet et porcinum numen adoret/ et caeli summas advocet auriculas,/ ni tamen et ferro succiderit inguinis oram/ et nisi nodatum solverit arte caput,/ exemptus populo patria migrabit ab urbe/ et non ieiuna sabbata lege premet.*» Cohen (1999) 40 n. 54, rightly praises E. Courtney, *The Poems of Petronius*, 1991, for emending *graia* in ms. W to *patria* in line 5. While Cohen focuses on the issue of circumcision, I would like to call attention to the depiction of the Judean man who is not circumcised being *exemptus populo* and emigrating from his *patria...urbe*. Clearly the Roman elite writer, in his satirical scorn, sees this Judean/Jew being both excluded from his local Judean community and needing to migrate away from home if he chooses not to be circumcised. To me, this describes either an uncircumcised male child, now grown, of mixed marriage between Judean and non-Judean, or possibly a male uncircumcised gentile Christian who followed Paul's (or another preacher's) message; neither type of male believer in the Judean god could be accepted as members of the Judean communities of their own cities without circumcision. Does *patria...urbe* have to be Jerusalem, as the previous emendation of ms. W's *graia* to *sacra* by Baehrens seems to imply? I do not think so; this could very well also apply to someone from Alexandria or elsewhere. Also, Stern (1974) vol. 1, 444, #195 prints «*exemptus populo Graias migrabit ad urbes,*» which only confuses the issue further. In any case, in the last line of the epigram, this same «banished/released Judean» no longer observes the Sabbath either. Petronius may distort Judean ritual into pig-worship, but he also may in fact be describing a type of Judean known or believed by an elite politician in Rome such as himself to exist in his own day.

At about this time, two dignitaries from the region of the Trachonitans, who were under the authority of the king [Agrippa, who was an ally of the Romans], came to me, supplying their own horses and weapons and bringing along some money too. *The Judeans kept pressuring these men to be circumcised if they wished to live among them. But I would not allow them to be forced*, declaring, «Each person must revere God in keeping with his own chosen way, but *not by force*, and these men who are fleeing to us expecting security, ought not to have second thoughts.» When the mob had been persuaded, I generously provided the men who had come with all [amenities] for their familiar way of life.⁷⁹

The rebels here in Galilee were eager to establish their own autonomous Israel again, as attested in Jewish coinage minted during the war,⁸⁰ yet Josephus insists that he refused to adopt forced circumcision of men who were now in the land of Israel, though he certainly knew that it had been an important facet of Hasmonean rule of Judea, since he himself later wrote the history of the Hasmoneans. Josephus, despite his own expressed opinion about circumcising foreigners in Galilee, nevertheless will celebrate John Hyrcanus as a hero in the *Antiquities* for being such a success, and he even named one of his sons Hyrcanus, since he was very proud of his descent through his mother from the Hasmoneans.⁸¹

Other rebels, however, were not as open-minded as Josephus claims to have been and did force circumcision upon foreigners, as in the case of the Roman garrison commander in Jerusalem named Metilius, who surrendered to the rebels there at the outset of the war. After the rebels had treacherously slaughtered all the Roman soldiers with whom they had just sworn oaths, the Roman Metilius, in order to stay alive, «promised to behave as a Jew even to the point of circumcision.» (*War* 2.454) Any non-Jewish Roman would have considered this circumcision quite humiliating under the circumstances, and also disfiguring; Josephus, however, deliberately caps

⁷⁹ English translation comes from S. Mason (2001), Josephus, *Life* 112-113: «Κατὰ τοῦτον τὸν καιρὸν ἀφικνοῦνται πρὸς με δύο μεγιστάνες τῶν ὑπὸ τὴν ἐξουσίαν τοῦ βασιλέως ἐκ τῆς τῶν Τραχωνιτῶν χώρας ἐπαγόμενοι τοὺς ἑαυτῶν ἵππους καὶ ὄπλα, χρήματα δ' ὑποκομίζοντες. [113]τούτους περιτέμνεσθαι τῶν Ἰουδαίων ἀναγκαζόντων, εἰ θέλουσιν εἶναι παρ' αὐτοῖς, οὐκ εἶασα βιασθῆναι, φάσκων δεῖν ἕκαστον κατὰ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ προαίρεσιν τὸν θεὸν εὐσεβεῖν, ἀλλὰ μὴ μετὰ βίας, χρήναι δὲ τούτους δι' ἀσφάλειαν πρὸς ἡμᾶς καταφυγόντας μὴ μετανοεῖν. πεισθέντος δὲ τοῦ πλήθους τοῖς ἤκουσιν ἀνδράσιν τὰ πρὸς τὴν συνθήθῃ δίαιταν ἅπαντα παρεῖχον δασιλώως.»

⁸⁰ On coins, see Y. Meshorer, *Ancient Jewish Coinage*, Dix Hills, NY: Amphora Books, 1982, vol. 2; see also J. McLaren, "The Coinage of the First Year as a Point of Reference for the Jewish Revolt (66-70 CE)," *SCI* 22 (2003) 135-152.

⁸¹ I agree with Mason's 2001 note to *Life* 113 p 75, n 544, except for his comment that «Circumcision was an ancillary issue.» On his family lineage, see *Life* 2 and Mason's notes. Also, note G. Fuks, "Josephus and the Hasmoneans," *JJS* 41 (1990) 166-176, who discerns a more sympathetic treatment of the Hasmoneans in *Antiquities* than in *War*. I agree with Goodman (1994) 76: «It is hard to explain why Josephus, who was proud of his own Hasmonaeon lineage (Joseph. *Life*, 2-4), would have included such propaganda in his history, and I am unable to perceive any condemnation of the Hasmonaeans' actions in the historian's dry account.»

the episode by saying that the loss of a few men was minimal to the Romans, but instead was perceived by the Judeans as the beginning of the end for themselves and Jerusalem. For Josephus, the rebels' abuse of oaths of amnesty and insistence upon total conformity within Judean land to Jewish law for all residents, including captives, was simply wrong. Perhaps he says all of this in both *Life* and *Judean War* to make himself look better to his Roman audience, as many scholars claim; we can never know for certain. I suspect that Josephus had learned a few lessons from his own personal experiences after having been defeated in the war and held prisoner by the Romans for approximately two years. Whatever he wrote subsequently is the sum of this learning through experience, as well as his own knowledge of past Judean history, as he so amply demonstrates in his *Antiquities*.

It is this very mingling of the present with the past on the sensitive issue of forced circumcision that shapes Josephus' presentation of the remarkable story of the Biblical Dinah⁸² in his *Antiquities*. (*Ant.* 1.337-341) In Genesis 34, Dinah, the only daughter of Jacob, is abducted and raped by a man named Shechem, son of the local ruler. Jacob, who has just recently received the name «Israel» while wrestling with the angel, waits for his sons to return home, and it is with them that Shechem's father Hamor then attempts to broker a marriage between his son and Dinah. The sons of Israel reply to his offer:

To give our sister to an uncircumcised man would be a disgrace for us. We can agree only on one condition: *that you become like us by circumcising all your males*. Then we will give you our daughters, taking yours for ourselves; and we will stay with you to make one nation. (Gen. 34:14-16)

Hamor and his townsmen agree to the deal, and all the men are circumcised. On the third day after this, however, «while they were still in pain,» two of Israel's sons, Simon and Levi, attack the town, kill all the males, steal their wives, children, and property, and bring Dinah home. (Gen. 34:25-29) Jacob/Israel then expresses his fear that the people «living in this land» will seek revenge and destroy him and his family. So, how does Josephus recast this grim tale in *Antiquities*?⁸³ Most striking-

⁸² I extend thanks to Cara Hanson for encouraging me to include this important passage.

⁸³ H. St. J. Thackeray, *Josephus*, vol. 4: *Jewish Antiquities*, Books I-IV, Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1930, 161 n. f, and 163 n. b, explains that the festival settings (1.337 and 340) for the action in the Josephan account are extra-biblical, and Thackeray reports that a hexameter poem by Theodotus may have influenced Josephus' account; L. Feldman, *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, ed. Steve Mason, Volume 3: *Judean Antiquities: 1-4*, Leiden: Brill, 2000, 122-123 adds refinements of his own. I would emphasize that one can also see shades of Roman influence/coloring in the repeated setting of a festival for both Dinah's rape and the murderous raid of Jacob's sons, since the Romans in myth had abducted the Sabine women at a festival in order to increase their nation. (Livy 1.9) Furthermore, with Hamor called specifically a «king» and Shechem the «king's son,» the story also resonates with the rape of Lucretia by Sextus Tarquinius, son of Tarquinius Superbus, last king of Rome. (Livy 1.53 and Ovid, *Fasti* 2.685-852) After Lucretia's rape, a council of her family members is called, too. Dinah, however, plays

ly, he mentions nothing about Jacob's sons demanding that all the men in Hamor's town be circumcised. Instead, Josephus has Jacob himself take control and play the pragmatic *paterfamilias*: «And Iakobos, neither being able to refuse because of the rank of the one appealing to him, nor considering it lawful to give his daughter in marriage to a foreigner, decided to ask permission to hold a council about the matters that he requested.»⁸⁴ (*Ant.* 1.338) As Louis Feldman correctly observes: «Another delicate topic connected with Jacob on which Josephus walked a tightrope, so to speak, was with regard to intermarriage.»⁸⁵ Delicate, indeed: without mandatory circumcision (and no looting of property or stealing of women and children, either) it becomes also a blander, less threatening tale of family vengeance—Genesis-lite for the discriminating readers who do not need to hear (or be reminded of)⁸⁶ the sordid nationalistic details. For Josephus, the Judean future in the Roman world will require much more finesse than the political approach exhibited in certain scriptural accounts of the Judean past.

CONCLUSION

John Barclay has said that Paul in his treatment of circumcision «has radically redefined and reprioritized his inherited tradition, effecting a fundamental shift in Jewish discourse»⁸⁷—one which the Boyarins do not discuss when tracing the «feminization» of Judaism.⁸⁸ My suggestion in this paper is that Paul was not simply remodeling a received scriptural, hermeneutic, or didactic tradition, but also was reacting directly to the historical legacy of Hasmonean policy in his rejection of mandatory circumcision.⁸⁹ Less than twenty years after Paul wrote to the Galatians, Josephus had seen the devastating effects of the failure of the reborn dream of Judean sovereignty during the Jewish revolt against the Romans, which resulted in

nowhere near the active role in Josephus that the Sabine women or Lucretia do in the Roman accounts with their reported speeches and dramatic suicide in the latter case.

⁸⁴ This translation comes from L. Feldman (2000) 123.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 123, n. 957. See also L. Feldman, "Josephus' Portrait of Jacob," *JQR* 79 (1988-89) 101-151. On circumcision as a way of controlling Jewish daughters' marriages, see Barclay (1996) 439.

⁸⁶ See L. Feldman (2000) xvii-xx on the "Social Context and Audience" of *Antiquities*; add to this L. Troiani, "I Lettori delle Antichità Guidaiche de Giuseppe: Prospettive e Problemi," *Athenaeum* 74 (1986) 343-353, especially 353, on possible Jewish readers for *Antiquities*.

⁸⁷ Barclay (1998) 549.

⁸⁸ But do see Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, Berkeley: UC Press, 1994.

⁸⁹ Jervis (1999) 23, offers a parallel modern Christian interpretative approach towards Paul's *Galatians*: «Spending time studying Paul is a corrective to viewing Christianity as the same as certain moral frameworks, or to equating particular cultural expressions, or even patriotism, with Christianity. Paul's argument against circumcision, which is an argument against identifying with a certain religious disposition and a particular nation, speaks to our current struggles to be shaped by Christ apart from inherited standards of behavior or national allegiance.»

the death or enslavement of tens of thousands of people⁹⁰ and the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. Josephus definitely distances himself and all sensible characters in his works, including Abraham, from the notion that God will ensure the land of Israel itself to his people in a covenant, with the sign of that covenant being circumcision.⁹¹ Instead, in *Antiquities* the descendants of Isaac will win the land of Canaan «from Sidon up to Egypt» through war (*Ant.* 1.191), but with no mention of this as part of a covenant connected to the land that runs in perpetuity.⁹² Roman *realpolitik* had made moot any dream such as this, at least for Josephus.⁹³ Despite the difference in their agendas in the first century, both Paul and Josephus reject the Judean nationalistic and imperialistic policy of forced circumcision.

⁹⁰ Josephus, *War* 6.420-421, tallies 1,100,000 dead from siege of Jerusalem alone and 97,000 enslaved during the entire war. Even if we divide these numbers by ten, they are still huge Judean losses.

⁹¹ See B.H. Amaru, "Land Theology in Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*," *JQR* 71 (1980-1) 201-229, where she explains that in his rewriting of Judean history, Josephus downplays Judean covenantal claims to the land after the war is over.

⁹² Feldman (2000) 72 n. 596 also reminds the reader of Sandmel's (1956) observation that here it is «extending only from Sidon to Egypt (*Ant.* 1.191), rather than from the Euphrates to Egypt (so Gen. 15:18), perhaps because Jewish territory never actually reached the Euphrates, and Josephus did not wish to have his divine prediction contradicted by the historical facts.»

⁹³ In another sixty years, the Judeans will rise up again, this time against the Romans under emperor Hadrian, perhaps because he had abolished their right to perform circumcision under the law against castration and poisoning; see E. Smallwood, "The Legislation of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius against Circumcision," *Latomus* 18 (1959), 334-347.