

PART I

Who Was a Jew?

CHAPTER I

Was Herod Jewish?

Who was a Jew in antiquity? How was “Jewishness” defined? In their minds and actions the Jews erected a boundary between themselves and the rest of humanity, the non-Jews (“gentiles”), but the boundary was always crossable and not always clearly marked. Gentiles do not always behave as they might be expected to behave: a gentile might associate with Jews, or observe Jewish practices, or “convert” to Judaism. Jews do not always behave as they might be expected to behave: a Jew might cease associating with Jews, or cease observing Jewish practices, or deny Judaism outright. Such gentiles and Jews have crossed the boundary, or, at least, raise serious questions about the boundary and its efficacy in keeping Jews “in” and gentiles “out.” Or a Jew might threaten the boundary through marriage with a gentile: in such a situation, is the Jew still a Jew? Has the gentile partner somehow become a Jew? What is the status of the offspring of this union?

The “Jewishness” of all these boundary crossers had to be determined by various jurisdictions and groups. The organized Jewish community, the municipal or provincial governments, and the imperial government each had an interest in determining whether a given individual was a Jew. For example, if in the year 80 C.E. a gentile in Ephesus converted, or claimed to have converted, to Judaism, the local Jewish community would have had to determine whether it would accept him or her as a member; the municipal government would have had to determine whether this person could now enjoy the privileges that traditionally had been extended to Jews; and the imperial government would have had to determine whether this person was now subject to the Jew-

ish tax levied upon all Jews in the Roman empire as punishment for the war of 66–70 C.E. Had the conversion taken place before 70 C.E., when the Jerusalem temple was still standing, the priests would have had to determine whether this person, once a gentile, was now to be treated as a Jew and allowed to join other Jews in the inner precincts. There is no reason to assume that all these jurisdictions would necessarily have reached identical conclusions in every case, or to assume that the boundary definition used by the Jewish community of Ephesus would necessarily have been identical with that which was operative in the other organized Jewish communities of Asia Minor, or, for that matter, of Italy, Syria, Egypt, North Africa, Judaea, and Babylonia.

The convert's social status too was subject to conflicting judgments. How did this person, born a gentile, see him/herself? How was this person seen by his/her spouse, relatives, friends, and other gentiles? How was this person seen by native-born Jews? Once again, there is no reason to assume that these questions will have received uniform answers. A gentile who engaged in "judaizing" behavior may have been regarded as a Jew by gentiles, but as a gentile by Jews. A gentile who was accepted as a convert by one community may not have been so regarded by another. Nor should we assume that the converts of one community were necessarily treated like those of another, because the Jews of antiquity held a wide range of opinions about the degree to which the convert became just like the native born.

Even if we leave aside for a moment all these problematic boundary crossers, we are still left with a serious puzzle: the meaning of the word *Jew* itself. The predecessors of the English word *Jew*, Greek *Ioudaios* and Latin *Iudaeus*, were originally ethnic-geographic terms, like "Egyptian," "Syrian," "Cappadocian," "Thracian," and so forth. Thus instead of "Jews" we should, in many cases, speak rather of "Judaeans," the residents of Judaea (geography), who constitute the *ethnos*, "nation" or "people," of the Judaeans (ethnicity). Similarly, Egyptians are those who reside in Egypt and constitute the nation or people of the Egyptians. At some point in their history Greek *Ioudaios* and Latin *Iudaeus* came to have another meaning: a *Ioudaios* is anyone who venerates the God of the temple of Jerusalem and observes his laws. In other words, a *Ioudaios* is a Jew, a term designating "culture" or "religion." Here *Ioudaios* parts company with "Egyptian," "Syrian," "Cappadocian," "Thracian," and so on because none of those terms ever became normative terms of "culture" or "religion." Thus, were the "Jews" of antiquity an ethnic group? A geographic group? A religious group? Or, perhaps, all three?

This book is devoted to puzzling out the answers to these questions.

In this brief chapter I would like to illustrate the problematic nature of “Jewishness” by focusing on one specific case. I will keep the scholarly apparatus to a minimum as slight compensation for the fact that in all subsequent chapters I do not. My illustrative example is Herod the Great, king of Judaea for thirty-four years (37–4 B.C.E.), builder extraordinaire, and the murderer of his wives and children.¹

Numerous different sources attest that Herod the Great was a *Ioudaios*—that is, a Judaeen, a member (and king) of the ethnic-geographic polity constituted by the inhabitants of Judaea. Thus Plutarch, in his *Life of Antony*, gives a list of the kings who supported Antony against Octavian; these included Archelaus of Cappadocia, Philadelphus of Paphlagonia, Mithridates of Commagene, Malchus of Arabia, and “Herod of Judaea” (*Hērōdēs ho Ioudaios*). The labels on Italian wine amphorae discovered at Masada indicate that the wine was destined for Herod *Iudaicus*, Herod of Judaea.² In his narrative Josephus regularly refers to Herod as “king of the Judaeans,” and even has Herod address a crowd in Jerusalem as “my kinsmen” (or, perhaps, “my fellow tribesmen”). Herod tells them that “our fathers” had built the temple. These Josephan passages also clearly imply that Herod the Judaeen was also, as would be expected, a Jew—that is, someone who venerates the God whose temple is in Jerusalem. When the temple was being rebuilt, Josephus reports, Herod did not enter the sacred precincts because he was not a priest; in fact all the laborers on the project had to be priests.³ Herod was not a priest, but, in Josephus’ estimation at least, clearly was a Judaeen and a Jew.

Herod’s Judaeanness/Jewishness was conceded even by those who might have had reason to deny it. Not long before the outbreak of the war in 66 C.E., there were riots in the city of Caesarea, sparked by a feud between the two dominant groups in the city. Here is the report of the *Jewish Antiquities*:

There arose also a quarrel between the Jewish and Syrian inhabitants of Caesarea on the subject of equal civic rights. The Jews claimed that they had

1. For a parallel discussion of this question but with a different focus and a different purpose, see Albert Baumgarten, “On the Legitimacy of Herod and His Sons as Kings of Israel” (in Hebrew), in *Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple, Mishna, and Talmud Period: Studies in Honor of Shmuel Safrai*, ed. I. Gafni et al. (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi, 1993) 31–37. For a brief discussion, see Richardson, *Herod* 52–53.

2. Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 61.3 = M. Stern, *Authors* no. 267; Cotton and Geiger, *Masada II* 147–148. On *Iudaicus*, see chapter 3 below, note 21.

3. King of the Judaeans: *AJ* 15.311; “my kinsmen” (*andres homophuloi*): *AJ* 15.382; “our fathers”: *AJ* 15.385; Herod not a priest: *AJ* 15.420.

the precedence because the founder of Caesarea, their king Herod, had been of Jewish descent; the Syrians admitted what they said about Herod, but asserted that Caesarea had before that been called Strato's Tower, and that before Herod's time there had not been a single Jewish inhabitant in the city.⁴

The parallel report in the *Jewish War* is slightly different:

Another disturbance occurred at Caesarea, where the Jewish portion of the population rose against the Syrian inhabitants. They claimed that the city was theirs on the ground that its founder, king Herod, was a Jew. Their opponents admitted the Jewish origin of its second founder [more literally: Their opponents admitted that its founder was a Jew], but maintained that the city itself belonged to the Greeks, since Herod would never have erected the statues and temples which he placed there had he destined it for Jews.⁵

Both translators take *Ioudaios* here to mean "Jew," so that the quarrel is between "Jews" and Syrians (who, in the *Jewish War* passage, are synonymous with "Greeks"), and Herod is declared to be a "Jew" or "of Jewish descent." I would prefer to take the term throughout in the sense "Judaean," so that the quarrel is between "Judaicans" and Syrians, and Herod is declared to be a "Judaean" or "Judaean by birth" (or "Judaean by descent"). The struggle in Caesarea is between two ethnic groups vying for power. The last word of the *Jewish War* excerpt, however, is perhaps best kept as *Jews*, because here religious sensitivities are at issue: Judaicans ("Jews") would not tolerate statues and temples, but Greeks (that is, Greek-speaking polytheists) would welcome them.

Let us return to Herod. In the *Jewish War* passage, the Judaicans of Caesarea claim that Herod, the founder of the city, was a Judaean. In the *Jewish Antiquities* they claim that Herod was "Judaean by birth"—that is, a real Judaean, a genuine Judaean.⁶ In both passages the Syrians concede the point, and try to establish their claims to political dominance on other criteria. Clearly, it would have been to the Syrians' advantage to deny Herod's Judaicanness and to claim that Herod was by birth something else, not Judaean, but they made no such denials or claims; by the 60s C.E. everyone seems to have known that Herod had been a *Ioudaios*.

But how did Herod come to be a Judaean/Jew? Josephus gives two contrasting explanations:

4. *AJ* 20.173, trans. Feldman.

5. *BJ* 2.266, trans. Thackeray.

6. S. J. D. Cohen, "*Ioudaios to genos*" 32 and 35.

There was a certain friend of Hyrcanus, an Idumaeen called Antipater, who, having a large fortune and being by nature a man of action and a trouble-maker, was unfriendly to Aristobulus and quarreled with him because of his friendliness to Hyrcanus. Nicolas of Damascus, to be sure, says that his family belonged to the leading Jews who came to Judaea from Babylon. But he says this in order to please Antipater's son Herod, who became king of the Jews by a certain turn of fortune . . . This Antipater, it seems, was first called Antipas, which was also the name of his father, whom King Alexander (Jan-naeus) and his wife appointed governor of the whole of Idumaea, and they say he made friends of the neighboring Arabs and Gazaeans and Ascalonites, and completely won them over by many large gifts.⁷

Herod was son of Antipater, but who was Antipater? Nicolas of Damascus, resident adviser, tutor, and intellectual at the court of Herod, contended that Herod's family descended from the blue bloods who came to Judaea from Babylon (in the Persian period).⁸ In American terms, Nicolas is saying that Herod's ancestors arrived on the *Mayflower*. Josephus argues that Nicolas is lying in order to flatter his employer; Herod was not the first or the last autocrat who was unhappy with his pedigree and commissioned a court historian to discover a better one. Nicolas complied. What is important about the fabrication is that it reveals that Herod realized that his real pedigree was inadequate to assure him of an unassailable claim to the epithet *Ioudaios*.

Josephus contends that Herod was really an Idumaeen.⁹ He was the son of Antipater the Idumaeen, scion to a family that had long been prominent in Idumaeen politics and close to the Hasmonean dynasty. The family also had connections with "the neighboring Arabs and Gazaeans and Ascalonites." But Josephus has also said that Herod was a Judaeen; how did the Idumaeans come to be Judaeans? Josephus explains:

Hyrcanus also captured the Idumaeen cities of Adora and Marisa, and after subduing all the Idumaeans, permitted them to remain in their country so long as they had themselves circumcised and were willing to observe the laws of the Judaeans. And so, out of attachment to their ancestral land, they submitted to circumcision and to having their manner of life in all other

7. *AJ* 14.8–10, trans. Marcus.

8. The information in parentheses is not stated, but I assume that this is what is meant; the author of *Yosippon* also understood Nicolas to mean "in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah" (*Yosippon* 1.146, ed. Flusser).

9. See too *BJ* 1.123. Qumran Scroll 4Q491 may also allude to Herod as an Idumaeen (Edomite); see M. Smith, *Studies* 2.74–75.

respects made the same as that of the Judaeans. And from that time on they have continued to be Judaeans.¹⁰

In chapter 4 below I shall treat this passage in some detail. In the 120s B.C.E. John Hyrcanus incorporated the Idumaeans into the Judaeian state. The Idumaeans became Judaeans, except that they also still remained Idumaeans. Politically, they became Judaeans, citizens in the Judaeian state (or Judaeian League). Religiously, they became Jews, at least to the extent that they were expected to observe the laws and customs of the Judaeans. Ethnically, however, they remained as they had been, Idumaeans, just as the Galileans retained their own ethnic-geographic identity even after becoming Judaeans/Jews.

For some Judaeans, especially “genuine” Judaeans from the “real” Judaea (the district around Jerusalem), Idumaeans like Herod would always be outsiders, a combination of parvenus and country bumpkins. Antigonus the Hasmonean tried to convince the Romans that “it would be contrary to their own notion of right if they gave the kingship to Herod who was a commoner and an Idumaeian, that is, a half-Jew.” Herod suffers from two genealogical liabilities, according to Antigonus: he is a commoner (a nonpriest) and an Idumaeian. “Half-Jew” is Marcus’ translation of *hēmioudaios*, but surely “half-Judaean” is the intent here.¹¹ Antigonus is commenting not on Herod’s religiosity but on his pedigree: Idumaeans are Judaeans, but from the perspective of the Hasmoneans (who had themselves once been parvenus and country bumpkins) they are only half-Judaean, because they remain Idumaeans. Needless to say, the Romans ignored Antigonus’ argument. But to counter such attitudes Herod had his official biographer invent for him a full Judaeian, non-Idumaeian, ancestry.

In common parlance a “half-ethnic” is a half-breed, a mestizo or mulatto—that is, the offspring of parents of dissimilar ethnicity. Hence when we say that someone is “half-Italian,” we mean that one of her parents is Italian and that the other is not. By the same logic we may speak of someone who is one-quarter or one-eighth Black (a quadroon, an octoroon). Therefore it is important to note that when Herod’s detractors called him a “half-Judaean,” they were not referring to the dissimilar ethnicity of his parents. Herod was a half-Judaean because his fa-

10. *AJ* 13.257–258.

11. *AJ* 14.403. Goodman, *Who Was a Jew?* 10, writes: “In another passage, which is theologically incomprehensible (at least to me), Josephus affirmed that the Idumaeans . . . were now ‘half-Jews.’” The term “half-Jew” may be theologically incomprehensible, but the term “half-Judaean” is fully comprehensible.

ther Antipater was an Idumaean—that is, a half-Judaean. There is no reference here to Herod’s mother; her ancestry seems to be irrelevant. According to rabbinic law, however, the status of the offspring of inter-marriage follows the status of the mother. And who was Herod’s mother? A woman named Kypros (or Kypri), “of an illustrious Arab family.”¹² According to rabbinic law Herod will have been a gentile because he was the son of a non-Jewish woman who is not reported to have converted; neither Antipater nor Herod nor Antigonus nor Josephus knew this, of course, because the matrilineal principle did not yet exist in the first century B.C.E. or first century C.E., as I shall discuss in chapter 9 below. Herod was a “half-Judaean/Jew” through his father.

Later generations elaborated yet other genealogies for Herod the Great. In the middle of the second century C.E. Justin Martyr wrote his *Dialogue with Trypho*, a defense of Christianity and an attack on Judaism. The book revolves around the interpretation of the Hebrew Bible (the “Old Testament”), Justin insisting that the Jews have completely misunderstood its intent and its message. As one of his many proofs of the truth of Christianity, Justin cites Genesis 49:10: *The scepter shall not depart from Judah . . . until that which is laid up in store for him shall come* (translation based on the Septuagint). Justin, and indeed virtually all subsequent Christian exegetes, argued that these obscure words meant that the Messiah would be the last king of Judah: after the arrival of the Messiah, Israel would no longer have any royal office. And since after the birth and passion of Jesus the Jews no longer have any king or prophet, here is proof that the biblical prophecy has been fulfilled and that Jesus is the Christ. Justin is aware of a possible Jewish objection: we lost our kingship even before the birth and passion of Jesus. Justin responds, “For though you affirm that Herod, after whom he [Jesus] suffered, was an Ascalonite, nevertheless you admit that there was a high priest in your nation . . . also you had prophets” (*Dialogue with Trypho* 52). Thus even if the Jews are right that Herod was an Ascalonite, and that they had lost their kingship even before the arrival of Jesus, nevertheless the prophecy is fulfilled by the fact that Jews had priests and prophets until the arrival of Jesus, after which they were lost in the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E.

The Jewish-Christian debate concerning the interpretation of Genesis 49:10 is not our concern here, even if I shall have to refer to it again in a moment; what is important for us is that Justin contends that the Jews say that Herod, presumably Herod the Great, was a native of the

12. *BJ* 1.181 and *AJ* 14.121.

Philistine city of Ascalon. No extant Jewish source makes this claim about Herod, but the attribution of the claim to Jews is not impossible, and perhaps not implausible. When and why the Jews will have invented the story, we do not know. How they came to associate Herod with Ascalon, we also do not know. Perhaps the fact that the Herodian family had connections with “the neighboring Arabs and Gazaeans and Ascalonites,” as Josephus said, gave rise to the polemic that Herod was an Ascalonite himself. Perhaps.¹³

Sextus Julius Africanus, a Christian writer who lived two generations after Justin (ca. 160–ca. 240 C.E.), has a fuller version of the Ascalon story:

When Idumaeen brigands attacked the city of Ascalon in Palestine, among their other spoils they took away captive from the temple of Apollo, which was built on the walls, Antipater the child of a certain Herod, a temple slave, and since the priest was unable to pay ransom for his son, Antipater was brought up in the customs of the Idumaeans and later was befriended by Hyrcanus the high priest of Judaea.¹⁴

Here we are told that Antipater, father of Herod, was from the Philistine city of Ascalon, where his father (that is, Herod’s grandfather) served as a priest or temple slave. As a young boy he was captured by the Idumaeans and was raised by them. The story does preserve some vestige of a connection between Herod and Idumaea, but the bottom line is that Herod is not Idumaeen and not half-Judaeen/Jewish—he is not Jewish at all! He is Ascalonite.

A different story appears in the Babylonian Talmud:

Herod was a slave of the Hasmonean house.

He set his eyes on a young girl (of the house).

One day he heard a heavenly voice which said, “Any slave who rebels today, will succeed.”

He rose up and killed all his masters, and spared (only) that young girl.

When she saw that he wished to marry her, she ascended the roof and said aloud, “Anyone who comes and says that he is from the Hasmonean house, he is (really) a slave, because none of them is left except me.” She threw herself down from the roof to the ground (and died) . . .

13. In “Die frühchristliche Überlieferung über die Herkunft der Familie des Herodes,” *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 1 (1962) 109–160, Abraham Schalit argues that this story derives from Jewish anti-Herodian propaganda of Herod’s own time. This is possible, of course, but Schalit’s conjectures leave me unconvinced. The story may be a Christian invention imputed to the Jews. See below for an analogous development.

14. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 1.7.11 (quoting Julius Africanus).

He said, “who expounds the verse *be sure to set as king over yourself one of your own people; (you must not set a foreigner over you, one who is not your kinsman)* (Deut. 17:15)? The sages.”

He rose up and killed all the sages . . .¹⁵

In this story “Herod” is clearly Herod the Great, and the Hasmonean princess is clearly Mariamme. Herod is a slave of the Hasmonean house; we are meant, of course, to understand that he is a *gentile* slave. As a slave and a gentile, Herod realizes he is disqualified for kingship by Deuteronomy 17:15, which requires a king to be a “kinsman” (or “brother”) to his Jewish subjects. How old this piece of anti-Herodian propaganda might be, I cannot say; the Talmud cites the story anonymously, and there is no telling how long the story circulated before being incorporated in the text. The talmudic story shares with Justin the idea that Herod was not a legitimate Judean king, and with Africanus the idea that Herod was a gentile, but the Talmud knows nothing of Herod’s origin in Ascalon (or, for that matter, in Idumaea).

Our last story combines motifs from Justin and the Talmud. The story is found in the Slavonic version of Josephus, a product of the thirteenth century. The origins and history of this version are much debated, but the following story, which has no parallel in the genuine writings of Josephus, is certainly of Christian origin:

At that time the priests mourned and grieved one to another in secret. They dared not [do so openly for fear of] Herod and his friends.

For [one Jonathan] spoke: “The law bids us have no foreigner for king. Yet we wait for the Anointed, the meek one, of David’s line. But of Herod we know that he is an Arabian, uncircumcised. The Anointed will be called meek, but this [is] he who has filled our whole land with blood. Under the Anointed it was ordained for the lame to walk, and the blind to see, and the poor to become rich. But under this man the hale have become lame, the seeing are blinded, the rich have become beggars . . .”

But one of them, by name Levi, wishing to outwit them, spoke to them . . . Overcome with shame, he fled to Herod and informed him of the speeches of the priests which they had spoken against him. But Herod sent by night and slew them all . . .¹⁶

15. Bava Batra 3b, in Aramaic.

16. H. St. J. Thackeray, *Josephus: The Jewish War* (Loeb Classical Library) 3.636–638, replacing the Greek text at *BJ* 1.364–370. For an alternative translation, see *La prise de Jérusalem de Josèphe le Juif: Texte vieux-russe*, ed. V. Istrin, A. Vaillant, and P. Pascal, 2 vols. (Paris: Institut d’Etudes Slaves, 1934–1938) 1.54–57. On the Slavonic Josephus, see E. Bickerman, “Sur la version vieux-russe de Flavius Josèphe,” in Bickerman, *Studies* 3.172–195.

Jonathan the priest wants to believe that Herod is the Anointed one, the Messiah, but is unable to square Herod's pedigree and accomplishments with those promised by the prophets: the Messiah is to be of David's line, but Herod is an Arabian; the Messiah is to be meek, but Herod is cruel; the Messiah is to perform miracles, but Herod has brought disaster. The idea that Jews believed, or wanted to believe, that Herod was the Messiah is the product of Christian exegesis of Genesis 49:10. As I discussed above in connection with Justin, Christians argued that the verse predicted the end of Judaeen kingship in the person of Jesus Christ; since Jews deny the kingship of Christ, they must believe that the verse refers instead to Herod the Great, the last king of the Jews; and if for Christians the referent of the verse is the Messiah, then for Jews too the referent of the verse must be the Messiah. Hence, Christian exegetes concluded, Jews must believe that Herod was the Messiah. Needless to say, no Jew in ancient or medieval times is known to have thought of Herod as the Messiah, but this fact did not stop Christian authors, like the author of the Slavonic Josephus, from imputing this belief to them.¹⁷

In the Christian story the priests take the place of the sages in the rabbinic story. In both stories those who explicate the Deuteronomic verse *you must not set a foreigner over you [as king]* are slain by Herod. In the rabbinic story the victims are the sages, in the Christian story the priests. Both sages and priests agree that Herod is a foreigner who may not rule over Israel; the rabbis think Herod was a gentile slave, while the priests in the Slavonic Josephus think Herod was "an Arabian, uncircumcised." Perhaps the association of Herod with Arabia was invented in the same manner as Herod's association with Ascalon. Perhaps the fact that the Herodian family had connections with "the neighboring Arabs and Gazaans and Ascalonites," as Josephus said, gave rise to the polemic that Herod was an Arab himself. And how did the Slavonic Josephus come to the idea that Herod was "uncircumcised"? The simplest explanation, surely, is that "uncircumcised" means simply "gentile."¹⁸ The crucial point for the author was to emphasize Herod's non-Jewishness, and describing him as uncircumcised effectively made that point. The juxtaposition of "Arab" with "uncircumcised" is somewhat jarring, since it seems likely that (many) Arabs in antiquity practiced cir-

17. See Bickerman, "La version vieux-russe," 3:187–189, and esp. idem, "Les Hérodiens," in Bickerman, *Studies* 3:22–33.

18. This is Jewish usage, common in the Middle Ages; cf. M. Nedarim 3:11.

cumcision, but a medieval romance writer did not have to trouble himself with the facts. We may assume that the historical Herod, as both an Idumaeon and a Judaeon, was circumcised.¹⁹

In sum, was Herod the Great Jewish? The historical Herod certainly was Jewish—that is, a member of the community of those who revere the God whose temple is in Jerusalem. Herod even built a magnificent temple for this God. Herod may have been a Jew, but he was also a “bad” Jew. Most forms of ancient Judaism, I think, would have disapproved of Herod’s murder of his wives and children. The largesse he bestowed on pagan temples, cities, and festivals, and his other violations of the ancestral laws, provoked hostile comment in antiquity.²⁰ If Herod was held accountable to the laws and customs of Judaism, it can only be because he regarded himself, and was regarded by other Jews, as a Jew. The fact that he often failed this standard implies that he was a “bad” Jew. Herod was also an Idumaeon, born of an Idumaeon father, but insofar as the Idumaeans had been incorporated into the Judaeon polity approximately fifty years before his birth, Herod was also a Judaeon. He was a member of the Idumaeon subdivision of the Judaeon polity; Judaeans from Jerusalem sneered at this “half-Judaeon” parvenu, but he was Judaeon nonetheless. In response his apologist Nicolas denied his Idumaeon roots and argued that Herod was a blue-blooded Judaeon whose ancestors had arrived on the Judaeon equivalent of the *Mayflower*. If we apply the criteria of later rabbinic law, Herod was a gentile, because he was the son of a gentile woman. Indeed, later stories in both Christian and Jewish sources claim that Herod was a gentile, although they do not derive this status from his mother. Herod invented a blue-blooded Judaeon extraction for himself, whereas his opponents (at least those who lived a safe distance after him) invented a non-Judaeon extraction for him. In sum, depending on whom you ask, Herod was either a *Ioudaios* (that is, a Judaeon and Jew), a blue-blooded Judaeon, an Idumaeon and therefore not a Judaeon, an Idumaeon and therefore also a Judaeon, an Idumaeon and therefore a half-Judaeon, an Ascalonite, a gentile slave, an Arab, or—the Messiah!

Herod was not a typical Jew of antiquity, and this range of opinions about a single individual is, we may assume, highly unusual. We may also be sure that this range of opinions was occasioned by subsequent Jew-

19. On the circumcision of Arabs, see chapter 2 below, note 77.

20. For example, *AJ* 15.267–276 and 326–330; 16.1–5; 19.328–329. On Herod’s Judaism, see Richardson, *Herod* 240–261, and chapter 4 below, note 76.

ish reflection on Herod's rule, rather than by contemporary views of his Jewishness. Still, this case exemplifies several important points. First, it shows the ambiguity inherent in the word *Ioudaios*: it is a political term, an ethnic-geographic term, and a religious term. I shall return to this in chapter 3. Second, it shows that Jewishness is a function of both ethnicity (birth) and religion (culture), a point to which I shall return in chapters 4 and 10 below. Third, it shows that the definition of conversion is a complicated matter (did the Idumaeans "really" become Judaeans/Jews?), a point to which I shall return in chapter 5. Fourth and last, it shows that manipulation of genealogy was relatively easy in antiquity, since there were no genealogical records or written documentation by which a Jew could prove that he really was Jewish; I shall return to this point in my next chapter.