

Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature
Yearbook 2016/2017

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Edited by

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Yearbook 2016/2017

Various Aspects of Worship
in Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature

Edited by
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To Jacques Vermeylen

Preface of the Editorial Board of Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook

This volume of papers from the Budapest conference of 2015 represents the first example of adjustments that we have made in the editorial conventions of the Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook. As editors we wish to point out some essential features in the extensive editing that we have done on this volume.

This collection of papers marks the initial implementation of our decision to adopt *The SBL Handbook of Style Second Edition* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014) for the composition and editing of all papers in the DCLY. We made this decision in order to ensure that the DCLY adheres to the international standards of biblical scholarship.

We devoted unprecedented time and energy to editing the papers from the Budapest conference. Nevertheless, we lacked sufficient resources of time and personnel to adhere to all the conventions of the *SBLHS 2nd edition* in this volume. We accepted each author's preference for the spelling conventions of English either in the UK or USA. Our editorial decisions resulted in some inconsistencies in this transitional volume of papers.

The provision of a bibliography at the end of each article is the only feature that will remain distinctive of the DCLY vis-à-vis the *SBLHS 2nd edition*. Nevertheless, the footnotes and bibliography will conform to the conventions of the *SBLHS 2nd edition*. Our abiding principle is that the bibliography should contain only those works that are referenced in an article. In due course the editors will issue a style sheet for applying the *SBLHS 2nd edition* to the DCLY. This style sheet will be published on the ISDCL/DCLY homepage (<https://www.uni-salzburg.at/index.php?id=21361>).

We are particularly concerned to enhance the quality of composition in the articles. We express our admiration for authors who are not native English speakers but whose writing meets the academic standard of quality prose at a university level. We want to encourage all scholars to attain this standard. To that end we shall insist that a scholar who lacks facility with English composition must submit his or her paper for editing by a colleague who possesses the required expertise in English prose. The object of the procedure is to ensure that each sentence clearly communicates the scholar's insights to the reader.

We appreciate the collaborative efforts of Dr. Albrecht Döhnert, our editorial director at De Gruyter, and the members of the International Society for the

Study of Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature for their important contributions to the enhancement of the DCLY.

Prof. Dr. Núria Calduch-Benages

Dr. Jeremy Corley

Prof. Dr. Michael W. Duggan

Prof. Dr. Renate Egger-Wenzel

(editors DCLY)

Preface

This volume is based on papers read at the 2015 biennial international conference of the International Society for the Study of Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature (ISDCL), held in Budapest from 28 June to 1 July 2015. The editors are grateful to the leaders of the Society for their decision made during the 2013 Berlin Conference to give Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary and Sapientia College of Theology the opportunity to organise the prestigious event. They also wish to express their gratitude to Walter de Gruyter Publishing House for publishing the papers of the conference and especially to Dr. Albrecht Döhnert and Stefan Selbmann for their constant support during the production of the book.

The contributions explore various aspects of worship as reflected in the literature of Judaism from the Second Temple period to Late Antiquity. The volume provides a fresh reading of various important issues especially within Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, rabbinic literature, gnostic traditions, and the emerging synagogue. The papers analyse texts and artefacts that reveal how various groups of Judaism understood the concept of worship—a pre-eminent form of expressing religious identity and interpreting fundamental traditions.

It is an especial honour for the editors that Prof. Karin Schöpflin (Göttingen), Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. mult. Otto Kaiser (Marburg), and the *Ehrenpräsident* of the Society, Prof. em. Friedrich V. Reiterer (Salzburg) considered it important to contribute to the volume.

During the earliest stages of organising the conference, a regular contributor of the biennial ISDCL meetings, Prof. Jacques Vermeylen was very enthusiastic about joining the participants. Sadly enough, his untimely death at the age of 71 (which occurred on 3 November, 2014) prevented him from actually participating in the conference. As a small token of gratitude, we dedicate this book to the memory of this warm-hearted and inspiring colleague.

Géza G. Xeravits
József Zsengellér
Ibolya Balla
(editors)

Contents

Preface of the Editorial Board of Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Yearbook — vii

Preface — ix

Stefan C. Reif

How did Early Judaism Understand the Concept of ‘Avodah?’ — 1

Karin Schöpflin and Friedrich V. Reiterer

The Garland: A Sign of Worship and Acknowledgement. A Hellenistic Symbol in Late Old Testament Books — 17

Stefan Beyerle

Temples and Sanctuaries within Their Apocalyptic Setting — 41

Pancratius C. Beentjes

Solomon’s Temple and Israel’s Earlier Cultic Traditions in 2 Chronicles 1–8 — 63

Jeremy Corley

Sirach Chapter 2 and the Temple — 77

Ibolya Balla

Ben Sira on the Piety of Men and the Piety of Women. Binary Opposites in the Taxonomy of Piety? — 107

Severino Bussino

Word and Prayer in the Book of Ben Sira — 117

Otto Mulder

Worship in the Restored Second Temple in Sirach 50. The Context of the Feast: Yoma or Tamid or Rosh Hashanah? — 141

Beate Ego

The Temple as a Place of Worship and the God of Heaven in 2 Maccabees — 167

Pierre J. Jordaan

A Narrative-Therapeutic Reading of the Martyr Narrative in 2 Maccabees 6 and 7. The Formation of a New Type of Theology — 181

Núria Calduch-Benages

Bodily Signs of Penitence in the Book of Baruch — 197

Michael Wojciechowski

Piety without the Temple according to the Book of Baruch — 215

Marko Marttila

Babylonian Priests in the Description of the Epistle of Jeremiah — 225

Gerhard Swart

No Place for Worship. Rhetorical Function and Historical Significance of a Prayer Theme in Deuterocanonical Literature — 247

Renate Egger-Wenzel

Gestures and Locations of Worship in the Book of Tobit — 261

Francis M. Macatangay

Charity and Cult in the Book of Tobit — 277

Markus Witte

Worship and Holy Places in the Wisdom of Solomon — 289

Barbara Schmitz

Aspects of Worship in the Letter of Aristeas — 305

Otto Kaiser

Die kosmische Bedeutung des jüdischen Hohenpriesters im Denken Philos von Alexandrien — 319

Géza G. Xeravits

Temple and Synagogue in Late Antiquity — 341

József Zsengellér

Worship in Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum — 365

Csaba Ötvös

Worship and Creation. Some Remarks on Concepts of Prayer in the Ancient Gnosis — 389

Contributors — 421

Index of References — 423

Stefan C. Reif

How did Early Judaism Understand the Concept of *‘Avodah*?

Abstract: The Hebrew word *‘avodah* has an intriguing semantic history. Early Rabbinic texts presuppose meanings that include “work,” “study,” “Temple worship” and “prayer.” Do these nuances have a respectable linguistic pedigree, or did the Rabbis invent them? In order to respond to this question, an assessment will be offered of how the word is defined in Classical Hebrew and in the Hebrew texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls. These findings will then be compared with how the word was rendered by those who translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek for the Septuagint, and by the grandson of Ben Sira. It will then be possible to offer a tentative analysis of how theology appears to have influenced language in the treatment of this word by the Jews of the Second Temple period.

Keywords: Classical Hebrew; Rabbinic Hebrew; Septuagint; Dead Sea Scrolls; theology

1 Introduction

In order to tackle the topic in hand it will be necessary to examine the Hebrew and Greek sources that reflect the manner in which the Jews of the Second Temple period used their languages to give expression to the relevant religious ideas, whether these represented inherited traditions, or their own innovative notions. To that end, the standard dictionaries of the Hebrew Bible will be closely examined for indications of what was conveyed by the term *‘avodah* and their conclusions will be critically compared with the linguistic evidence available from the Dead Sea Scrolls. This comparison will be followed by a close analysis, by way of numerous biblical verses, of how the Jews who translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek rendered the word *‘avodah*, and an examination of what some of the apocryphal (or Deuterocanonical) texts have to offer in this connection. What should then become apparent is the degree to which linguistic usage and religious ideology impacted on each other within the dynamic cultural developments that characterized Jewish history in the centuries being discussed. If the question is raised as to why the linguistic evolution is so important to our proper understanding of a theological notion, my reply would be that without the use of accurate linguistic and literary tools, the reconstruction of a cultural

edifice amounts to no more than imaginative speculation. It may sound interesting but it is not interestingly sound. As the German classicist and antiquarian, August Böckh, noted some two centuries ago, “philology is the historical construction of the collective life of a people in its practical and spiritual tendencies, therefore of its entire culture and all its products.”¹

Where, however, should one begin such a complex, scholarly procedure? One could quote the grave comment of the King to the White Rabbit in Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*; “Begin at the beginning... and go on till you come to the end: then stop,” but what would serve in this context as a useful beginning? As a student of rabbinic literature, I have a personal penchant for combing the rich deposits of variegated material that were amassed by the early rabbis and attempting to relate these to the Jewish religious ideas that preceded and followed them. What I propose to do here, therefore, is to start with two such texts and ask whether what is presupposed in those traditions about the meaning of the word ‘*avodah*’ is a reliable witness to what had been understood by earlier Jews or constitutes no more than a figment of rabbinic imagination. This will provide us with yardstick of some sort against which to measure the earlier Hebrew and Greek texts mentioned above. Once we have established how these two sets of Jewish sources relate to each other, it will be useful at the end of the article to return to the rabbinic corpus and ascertain whether additional traditions cited therein can teach us anything more about linguistic and theological interaction.

2 Early rabbinica

It is notoriously difficult to date the mishnaic tractate ‘Abot which is often known as “the chapters of the father” or “the ethics of the fathers” but may just as well mean “the main teachings,” given that *av* is not uncommonly used in that sense in early rabbinic texts.² Be that as it may, at least some of the contents of that tractate may reflect pre-mishnaic teaching and/or vocabulary, especially when there are linguistic parallels to be cited from other material that appears to record traditions presupposing the existence of the Jerusalem Temple and

¹ See the review by Peter N. Miller of *Philology* by James Turner, in *Times Literary Supplement*, March 27, 2015, 27.

² See, e.g., the expression אבות נזיקין in m. B.Qam. 1:1.

therefore dating to the first half of the first century CE. On such example occurs in m. 'Abot 1:2:

שמעון הצדיק היה משיירי אנשי כנסת הגדולה. הוא היה אומר, על שלושה דברים העולם עומד:
על התורה, על העבודה, ועל גמילות חסדים

Simeon the Righteous was one of the last members of the Great Assembly. He used to say:
The world stands on three things, namely, on Torah, *Temple worship* and charitable
behaviour.

The attribution to “Simeon the Righteous” is not one that can be historically authenticated and, as the recent research of Amram Tropper has demonstrated, may represent only a rabbinic awareness of the early nature of this teaching and a desire to link it with a personality already known from the book of Ben Sira and much admired in that source.³ That said, the parallel use of the expression על העבודה in m. Yoma 7:1, as well as the nature of the content here, supports the proposal that we are encountering a use of the word עבודה that refers directly to the Temple ritual. That is indeed how the logion is understood in all the early rabbinic interpretations. Was this then the only meaning in the wider Jewish circles of the axial period?

There is rabbinic evidence that points to an awareness of a wider semantic range for the word under discussion. One of the earliest midrashic collections, and one that perhaps contains interpretations from as early as the second or third Christian century, is the exegetical treatment of parts of Deuteronomy that is known as *Sifre*, which takes its name from the Aramaic term for books, that is, some of the Pentateuchal books. The aggadist is concerned to explain what is meant in Deut 11:13 by the command not only to love God but also ולעבדו, usually translated “and to serve him.” What kind of עבודה (“service”) is required? The midrash opens by suggesting that the verse describes how God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden ולשמרה ולעבדה, “to work it and look after it.” Such a rendering is also set aside by the aggadist on the grounds that Adam was required to undertake such labour only later as a punishment for his disobedience and *avodah* is therefore again explained as Torah study and *shemirah* as the observance of the precepts. The midrashic interpretation does not end there but adds another possibility. It is suggested that that *avodah* refers to prayer on the grounds that the service of God demanded by the verse is to be with all one’s heart and soul and that can only be by prayer.⁴ What we have then observed is a range of interpretations for the word עבודה within early rabbinic exegesis. It

³ TROPPER, Simeon, 213-216.

⁴ *Sifre*, ed. Finkelstein, 87-88.

may mean “Temple ritual,” “Torah study,” “work” and “prayer.” What must next be established is whether such meanings are also to be found in earlier Jewish texts.

3 Dictionaries of Biblical Hebrew

It is instructive that the dictionaries record a range of meanings for the root עבד. The following are examples of what they record:

BDB: 1. labour, work; 2. labour of a servant or a slave; 3. labour, service of captives or subjects; 4. service of God [relating primarily to sanctuary, temple and cult].⁵

KBL: 1. Arbeit (work); 2. Dienst (service which is rendered); 3. Gottesdienst (service of worship) – a. Kult (ceremonially); b. Kultbrauch (cultic custom).⁶

Ben Yehuda: 1. labour; 2. work; 3. service.⁷

DCH: 1. work, labour servitude; 2. deed, activity, function, task, duty; 3. service; 4. sacred service.⁸

The entry in *TDOT*, mainly the work of Helmer Ringgren, is also worthy of citation.⁹ There it is noted that there is a widespread occurrence of the root עבד in the Semitic languages in the basic sense of “work” “do” or “make” but also in the specialized sense of serving a superior such as a king or a god. It has the sense of performing a cultic act, making a sacrificial offering, celebrating a rite for God or idols, approved or illicit worship. The noun עבודה never refers to the worship of idols. There is, however, no indication in those dictionaries of a wider semantic range that might cover such topics as prayer and good deeds, noted by early rabbis. Have the Dead Sea Scrolls anything to offer in this regard?

4 Dead Sea Scrolls

Obviously it is not possible to cite all the instances in which the noun עבודה occurs in the Scrolls but a varied selection of texts provides important clues

⁵ BDB, Lexicon, 715.

⁶ KBL, Lexicon, 733.

⁷ BEN YEHUDA, Thesaurus, 4259.

⁸ DCH, ed. Clines, VI, 226-228.

⁹ TDOT, X, 403-405.

about the range of meanings covered in those texts. There are of course numerous examples of the usages listed in the dictionaries just cited but, in addition, the following examples document the existence of other meanings:

a. Carrying out activities of various sorts, including menial tasks and daily activities:

CD xiv 16: ולנער] א[שר אין לו דורש כל **עבודת** החבר

CD 20.7: אל {{ית}} יאות איש עמו בהון ו**בעבודה**

4Q511 63 iii.3 (Song of the Sage): תמימי דרך ומשפטים לכול **עבודת** מעשיהם:

b. Performance of a task or a duty

1QH ix 18: פלגתה **עבודתם** בכול דוריהם

CD x 19: אל ידבר בדברי המלאכה וה**עבודה** לעשות למשכים:

c. Army service and community involvement

1QM ii 9: בחמש ושלושים שני **העבודה** תערך המלחמה שש שנים ועורכיה כול העדה יחד

1QSa (=1Q28a, Appendix to Rule) I 19: וברובות שני איש לפי כוחו יתנו משאו: ב[עבו]דת העדה

d. Behaviour of a righteous or irreligious nature

1QS iv 9: ולרוח עולה רחוב נפש ושפול ידים **בעבודת** צדק

4Q511 63-64 ii 4: שפתי צדק ובהנכון לכול **עבודת** אמת

1QM xiii 5: רשעים וזעומים המה בכול **עבודת** נדת טמאתם

1QpHab x 11: בעבור כבודה לוגיע רבים **בעבודת** שוו

4Q511 (Song of the Sage) 18 ii 6: ורוח בינתיו ה **עבודת** רשעה:

e. Religious commitment (in its totality)

1QH x 38: לעזוב **עבודתכה** מפחד הוות רשעים

4Q521 (Messianic Apocalypse) 2 ii 3: התאמצו מבקשי אדני **בעבדתו**

f. Correct behaviour

4Q215 (Testament of Naphtali) 2 ii 8: פעולתם בטרם הבראם ו**עבודת** הצדק פלג: גבולותם

g. Divine service, maybe also prayer

4Q408 3/3a 9 (Sapiential Work, Apocalypse of Moses, 2c BCE?): **לעבדתם** לברך: את שמ קדשך

In sum, the evidence from the Scrolls testifies to a broader semantic range than that noted in the dictionaries. It includes numerous kinds of daily tasks, wheth-

er menial, military or communal; various types of approved or disapproved behaviour; as well as divine worship. It should be noted that DCH, as cited above, did come nearer to this kind of definition than the other dictionaries, presumably because it took account of the evidence from the Scrolls.

5 Greek sources

There are various terms that are used for the translation of the word עבודה in the Greek Jewish sources of the Second Temple period and these will now be cited from the original texts under the heading of each term:

5.1 λειτουργία, -ας public, religious or liturgical service; service, ministry (of priest)

i. Num 4:26

וְאֵת־כָּל־כְּלֵי עֲבֹדָתָם; וְאֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה לָהֶם, וְעָבְדוּ
καὶ πάντα τὰ σκεύη τὰ λειτουργικά ὅσα λειτουργοῦσιν ἐν αὐτοῖς
ποιήσουσιν
and all the vessels of service that they minister with they shall attend to

Meaning: “relating to liturgy.”

ii. Num 7:5

וְהָיוּ, לְעֹבֵד אֶת־עֲבֹדַת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד
καὶ ἔσονται πρὸς τὰ ἔργα τὰ λειτουργικά τῆς σκηנῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου
And they shall be for the works of the services of the tabernacle of the witness

Note here the use of two words (ἔργα and λειτουργικά) in Greek for the identical Hebrew root. Meaning: “for the liturgical functioning.”

iii. 2 Sam 19:19

וַעֲבָרָה הָעֶבְרָה לְעָבִיר אֶת־בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וְלַעֲשׂוֹת הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינָיו
καὶ ἐλειτούργησαν τὴν λειτουργίαν τοῦ διαβιβάσαι τὸν βασιλέα καὶ διέβη ἡ
διάβασις ἐξεγεῖραι τὸν οἶκον τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ τοῦ ποιῆσαι τὸ εὐθές ἐν
ὀφθαλμοῖς αὐτοῦ
And they performed the service of bringing the king over; and there went over a ferry-boat to remove the household of the king and to do that which was right in his eyes

The LXX has here offered a duplicated rendering, once reading עבר and once עבד, testifying to an awareness on the part of one translator that the root could have a broader meaning than that of liturgy, together with an uneasiness on the part of another translator about applying such a secular sense to עבד.

iv. 1 Chr 26:30

מַעְבָּר לַיַּרְדֵּן מֵעֶרְבָה לְכָל מְלֹאכֶת יְהוָה וְלַעֲבֹדַת הַמֶּלֶךְ
 πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου πρὸς δυσμαῖς εἰς πᾶσαν λειτουργίαν κυρίου καὶ
 ἐργασίαν τοῦ βασιλέως
beyond Jordan westward, for all the service of the Lord and work of the king

The LXX prefers to attach the word עבודה only to the service of God and to use the word מלאכה for the work of the king; unless of course the Hebrew version has been amended to express the opposite preference but that seems less convincing.

v. 1 Chr 28:21

וְהִנֵּה מִחֻלְקוֹת הַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַלְוִיִּם לְכָל־עֲבוֹדַת בַּיִת הָאֱלֹהִים וְעִמָּם בְּכָל־מְלָאכָה לְכָל־נְדִיב
 בַּחֲכָמָה לְכָל־עֲבוֹדָה וְכָל־הָעָם לְכָל־דְּבָרֶיךָ
 καὶ ἰδοὺ αἱ ἐφημερίαι τῶν ἱερέων καὶ τῶν Λευιτῶν εἰς πᾶσαν λειτουργίαν
 οἴκου τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ μετὰ σοῦ ἐν πάσῃ πραγματείᾳ καὶ πᾶς πρόθυμος ἐν σοφίᾳ
 κατὰ πᾶσαν τέχνην καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς εἰς πάντας τοὺς λόγους
 σου
And see, here are the courses of the priests and Levites for all the service of the house of the Lord, and there shall be with thee men for every workmanship, and every one of ready skill in every art; and also the chief men and all the people, ready for all thy commands

Here again the Greek translator uses what seems to him to be a more secular word by rendering עבודה not with λειτουργία but with τέχνη (L&S: art, craft, cunning).

vi. Ezra 7:19

וּמֵאֲנִיָּא דִּי־מִתְּיַבִּין לְךָ לְפָלְחֵן בַּיִת אֱלֹהֶךָ הַשְּׁלֵם קָדָם אֱלֹהֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם
 καὶ τὰ σκεῦη τὰ διδομένα σοι εἰς λειτουργίαν οἴκου θεοῦ παράδος ἐνώπιον
 τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν Ἱερουσαλημ
And deliver the vessels that are given thee for the service of the house of God, before God in Jerusalem

Note that the LXX regards the Aramaic פלחן as exactly equivalent to the Hebrew עבודה.

vii. Sir 50:28/19

עד כלותו לשרת מזבח

καὶ τὴν λειτουργίαν αὐτοῦ ἐτελείωσαν

[the high priest] completed **the service** at the altar

Young Ben Sira sensed that the use of the word שרת here was obviously a cultic one and therefore used the Greek normally employed for עבודה. Segal's comment about the looseness of the Greek rendering is not therefore wholly justified.¹⁰

5.2 ἐργασία, -ας from *ergon* meaning work, business, deed, industry

Then with the further developed meanings of work, business, trade, productive labour, this noun is used to translate עבודת/מלאכה/מעשה/פעולה/עסק/חשבון/משרת with the meanings of labour, production, work, workmanship, ministrations, service, business, [kind] acts.

i. Gen 29:27

מלא שבוע זאת ונתנה לך גם את זאת בעבדה אשר תעבד עמדי עוד שבוע־שנים אחרות
 συντέλεσον οὖν τὰ ἑβδομα ταύτης καὶ δώσω σοι καὶ ταύτην ἀντὶ τῆς
 ἐργασίας ἧς ἐργᾶ παρ' ἐμοὶ ἔτι ἑπτὰ ἔτη ἕτερα
 for your **labour** done

The LXX translator rightly uses a word with the sense of **work** since no ritual is involved.

ii. 1 Chr 6:33

וְאֶחָיִים הַלְוִיִּים נְתוּנִים לְכָל־עֲבוֹדַת מִשְׁכַּן בֵּית הָאֱלֹהִים
 καὶ ἀδελφοὶ αὐτῶν κατ' οἶκους πατριῶν αὐτῶν οἱ Λευῖται δεδομένοι εἰς
 πᾶσαν ἐργασίαν λειτουργίας σκηνης οἴκου τοῦ θεοῦ
 all the **ministrations of the cult**

Since the Levites were not responsible for the actual cultic acts but merely the accompanying ministrations, the translator inserts the word ἐργασίαν before λειτουργίας. See also 1 Chr 9:13 where he uses the same translation for the priests because the Hebrew itself has מלאכת עבודה.

¹⁰ SEGAL, Ben Sira, 246.

iii. Ps 103 (Heb:104):23

יֵצֵא אָדָם לְפַעֲלוֹ וְלַעֲבֹדָתוֹ עַד־עֶרֶב

ἐξελεύσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐπὶ τὸ ἔργον αὐτοῦ **καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ἐργασίαν αὐτοῦ**
ἕως ἑσπέρας

*Man shall go forth to his work **and to his labour** till evening*

The LXX translator needs to stress that such an ordinary man has nothing to do with the cultic עבודה as he himself defines it.

iv. Sir 6:19

ἐν γὰρ τῇ ἐργασίᾳ αὐτῆς ὀλίγον κοπιάσεις

כי בעבודתה מעט תעבוד

***For in cultivating her** you will labour but little*

While Ben Sira himself was happy to use this very prosaic sense of the root עבד, his grandson translated this mundane activity with a word without any cultic overtones.

v. Sir 7:15

ἔμβαλε αὐτὸν εἰς ἐργασίαν

אל תאיץ בצבא מלאכת עבודה

*Hate not [the routine of] **laborious work***

Again the grandson is careful about rendering the root עבד in a mundane sense.

In sum, the LXX translations of the Hebrew root עבד make it clear which sense applies in each verse, and that only the priests are involved in the central ritual. Ben Sira himself employs the root in the mundane sense but his grandson makes distinctions whenever necessary in his renderings.

5.3 δουλεία, -ας defined by Liddell & Scott as meaning slavery, bondage, service, labour, toil

This noun is used to translate משל/עבדים/עבודות/עבדה with meanings such as labour, toil, agriculture, military activity, service, yoke, burden, bondage, servitude, slavery.

i. Gen 30:26

כִּי אִתָּהּ יָדַעְתִּי, אֵת עֲבֹדָתִי אֲשֶׁר עֲבַדְתִּיךָ

γὰρ γινώσκεις τὴν δουλείαν ἣν δεδούλευκά σοι

*but you know **the toil that I have toiled for you***

The LXX translator understands the term in its most basic sense of physical labour.

ii. Exod 13:3

זְכוֹר אֶת־הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר יִצְאָתְּךָ מִמִּצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים
 μνημονεύετε τὴν ἡμέραν ταύτην ἐν ᾗ ἐξήλθατε ἐκ γῆς Αἰγύπτου **ἐξ οἴκου
 δουλείας**

*Remember this day in which ye came forth out of the land of Egypt, **out of the
 house of bondage***

Perhaps the LXX translator does not wish to describe the Israelites as slaves and therefore refers not to the house of slaves but to the house of slavery, bondage. The calumny (as, for instance, by Manetho) that the Jews were a tribe of lepers and brought plagues upon themselves may lie behind this hesitation.¹¹

iii. 1 Kgs 9:9

וַיִּתְּקוּ בְּאֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּ לָהֶם וַיַּעֲבֹדוּ
 καὶ ἀντελάβοντο θεῶν ἀλλοτρίων καὶ προσεκύνησαν αὐτοῖς καὶ
ἐδούλευσαν αὐτοῖς

*and they attached themselves to strange gods, and **worshipped** them, and
 served them*

The LXX translator uses his translation to indicate that this was a “service” to other gods and is not comparable to the Hebrews’ legitimate Temple or tabernacle worship.

iv. Ezra 6:18

וַהֲקִימוּ כַּהֲנָיִא בְּפִלְגְתָּהוֹן וְלוֹיֵא בְּמַחְלְקָתָהוֹן **עַל־עֲבֹדַת אֱלֹהֵא** דִּי בִירוּשָׁלַם
 καὶ ἔστησαν τοὺς ἱερεῖς ἐν διαίρέσεσιν αὐτῶν καὶ τοὺς Λευίτας ἐν μερισμοῖς
αὐτῶν ἐπὶ δουλείᾳ θεοῦ τοῦ ἐν Ἱερουσαλημ

*And they set the priests in the divisions, and the Levites in their separate or-
 ders, **for the service of God** in Jerusalem*

Although the priests are mentioned earlier, the later part refers to the Levites, and the LXX translator does not wish to refer to the work of the Levites as λειτουργία but as δουλεία.

v. Ezra 8:20

מִן־הַנְּתִיבִים שֶׁנָּתַן דָּוִד וְהַשָּׂרִים לְעֲבֹדַת הַלְוִיִּם
 καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ναθινιμ ὧν ἔδωκεν Δαυιδ καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες **εἰς δουλείαν τῶν
 Λευιτῶν**

*And of the Nathinim, whom David and the princes had appointed **for the ser-
 vice of the Levites***

¹¹ See STERN, Authors, 1.63.

The word δουλεία is even more appropriate here since the reference is not to the work of the Levites but to that of the Nethinim, a lower class of functionaries. They were identified as the Gibeonites who surrendered in the time of Joshua and whose descendants became menial servants in the Temple.¹²

In sum, the LXX translator uses a word that is usually used for tasks that are more mundane than those that are described by λειτουργία or ἐργασία and again makes a distinction between the real worship and other more menial forms of service.

5.4 λατρεία, -ας defined in Liddell & Scott as service, religious rite, worship, servitude

i. Exod 13:5

וְהָיָה כִּי־יִבְיֵאֵל יְהוָה אֶל־אֶרֶץ הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְהַחִתִּי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהַחִוִּי וְהַיְבוּסִי אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם
 לֵאמֹר לְךָ אֶרֶץ חֶלֶב וְדָבַשׁ וְעַבְדָּתָ אֶת־הָעִבְרָה הַזֹּאת בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה
καὶ ποιήσεις τὴν λατρείαν ταύτην ἐν τῷ μηνί τούτῳ
thou shalt perform this service in this month

The LXX translator does not use λειτουργία but opts for a slightly less cultic term in spite of the fact that this is an instruction about the paschal lamb. Perhaps he has in mind that the ceremony also has a domestic aspect when the paschal lamb is consumed *en famille* and that this is an extra-temple activity.

ii. Josh 22:27

כִּי עַד הוּא בִּיגִינוּ וּבִיגִיכֶם וּבִין דְּרוֹתֵינוּ אַחֲרֵינוּ לְעַבְדָּ אֶת־עֲבָדָת יְהוָה לְפָנֵינוּ בְּעֵלוֹתֵינוּ
 וּבִזְבָּחֵינוּ וּבִשְׁלָמֵינוּ
 ἀλλ' ἵνα ἦ τοῦτο μαρτύριον ἀνά μέσον ἡμῶν καὶ ὑμῶν καὶ ἀνά μέσον τῶν
 γενεῶν ἡμῶν μεθ' ἡμᾶς **τοῦ λατρεύειν λατρείαν κυρίῳ** ἐναντίον αὐτοῦ ἐν
 τοῖς καρπώμασιν ἡμῶν καὶ ἐν ταῖς θυσίαις ἡμῶν καὶ ἐν ταῖς θυσίαις τῶν
 σωτηρίων ἡμῶν
*that this may be a witness between you and us, and between our posterity
 after us, that we may do service to the Lord before him, with our burnt-
 offerings, and our meat-offerings and our peace-offerings*

Here, given the references to Temple sacrifices, cultic activity is the obvious subject. The LXX translator uses the phrase λατρεύειν λατρείαν to describe the

¹² TDOT, X, 105-107; BEN YEHUDA, Thesaurus, 3870.

commitment to serve the Lord which in this case consists of making the necessary sacrifices in the Temple.

iii. 3 Macc 4:14

ἀπογραφῆναι δὲ πᾶν τὸ φύλον ἐξ ὀνόματος οὐκ εἰς τὴν ἔμπροσθεν βραχεῖ
 προδεδηλωμένην τῶν ἔργων κατάπονον **λατρείαν**
the whole race should be registered by name, not for the wearisome service of
labour which was briefly described before

In this instance, the author of 3 *Maccabees* clearly uses the word λατρεία for labour, and not for any divine service.

In sum, the word λατρεία is used to denote a broad notion of religious service but also in its simpler sense of labour.

6 Summary of Greek evidence

What emerges is that for the Greek-speaking Jewish translators and authors, the notion of עבודה refers exclusively to divine service, formal worship and, sometimes, to para-liturgical activity. Other usages of the Hebrew word are to be rendered by alternative Greek expressions that do not carry any liturgical nuances. Ben Sira, for his part, uses the Hebrew word in the mundane senses of agriculture and labour but his grandson seeks to translate these instances with Greek that cannot be confused with any cultic activity. It is therefore clear from a comparison of the Hebrew evidence of the Dead Sea Scrolls with the Greek evidence of the LXX and contemporary Jewish literature in Greek that the former reflects a broader semantic range for the word עבודה and that this is not transferred to the Greek. Does this broader semantic range manifest itself also in the rabbinic texts other than those cited at the beginning of this article?

7 Other rabbinic traditions

a. Although עבודה (Temple service) was said by the talmudic teachers, as noted earlier, to have been replaced by תפלה (prayer), the former term was still used in the statutory prayers of post-talmudic times to refer to the Jerusalem cult. For example:

In the *amidah*, according to the Babylonian rite, the benediction third from the end is still entitled ברכת העבודה (the benediction concerning the Temple

service) and includes the phrases: “restore the Temple service to your shrine of your dwelling place” and “may the Temple service of Israel your people be found pleasing”.

In the *‘amidah*, according to the rite of Eretz Yisrael, that same benediction contains the sentence: “dwell in Zion and may your servants perform your service in Jerusalem.” It is clear from the references to Zion and Jerusalem that the root עבד must here refer to the Temple ritual.¹³ Similarly, the grace after meals, as preserved in Sephardi rites, includes at the conclusion of the third benediction the entreaty “rebuild Zion with joy and re-establish the service in Jerusalem,” which again is clearly an allusion to the system of worship that was practised in the Jerusalem Temple.¹⁴

b. m. Sanh. 7:6

העובד עבודה זרה--אחד העובד, ואחד המזבח, ואחד המקטר, ואחד המנסך, ואחד המשתחוה, והמקבלו עליו באלוה, והאומר לו אלי אתה

*With regard to the definition of **servicing idolatry**, it is all the same if one serves, sacrifices, offers incense, pours a libation, prostrates oneself, accepts the idol as a god or says “you are my god.”*

c. m. Šeb. 2:5

מקום שנהגו לסוך אינן סכין מפני שהיא עבודה

*Where there is a custom to oil unripe fruits, this should not be done in the seventh year because it constitutes **labour**.*

d. m. Ḥul. 9:2

וכולן שעייבדן, או שהילך בהן כדי עבודה--טהורים, חוץ מעור האדם

*When the hides of all of these have been trodden on as part of their **treatment**, they are ritually pure, but not human skin*

Whether the text is pointed as *‘abada* or *‘avoda*, the meaning is that the skin has undergone a **process of tanning**.

e. Mek. Rab. Yishma‘el, Shabbat 1 (ed. Lauterbach, 3.205)

ממחשבת עבודה: (Exod 31:16) וביום השביעי שבת וינפש

The sense here is **planning one’s work**.

¹³ See FINKELSTEIN, *Amidah*, 162-163; EHRlich, *Amidah*, 221.

¹⁴ See FINKELSTEIN, *Birkat*, 258; JACOBSON, *Nethiv Binah*, 3.61.

f. Sifre *Bemidbar* 75, ed. Horovitz, 70

א"ל [ר' טרפון לר' עקיבא] העבודה שלא בדיתה אשריך אברהם...

The word **העבודה** is here a reference to **Temple worship** but used as an oath, equivalent to: **By Heaven!**

g. b. B. Qam. 109b

ומנין שעבודתה ועורה שלו ת"ל ואיש את קדשיו לו יהיו

The meaning here is the **meat of the sacrifice** that is not offered on the altar. By metonymy or synecdoche, the meat offered as part of the **Temple worship** is given the name of that worship.

8 Conclusions

The data examined through this article allow us to draw some conclusions in reply to the question raised about how early Judaism understood the concept of *‘avodah*. Although the dictionaries of Biblical/Classical Hebrew record various senses of the word that range from work and labour to service and ritual, it is clear that the Dead Sea Scrolls and early rabbinic texts testify to broader semantic usage. The LXX translators prefer to represent such a broader usage by employing a number of Greek expressions and to restrict the translation *λειτουργία* to those instances in which reference is being made to the formal service of God. A comparison of the Hebrew of Ben Sira with the Greek translation by his grandson confirms such a distinction between the approaches of those writing in these two languages. There are numerous texts in the early rabbinic corpora that also demonstrate that the broader semantic range was retained in the Hebrew of the first few centuries of the Christian era.

These conclusions have ramifications for our critical understanding not only of the development of Hebrew language but also of the evolution of Jewish theology. While one may detect an increasing tendency within the books of the Hebrew Bible towards the religious centrality of *‘avodah*, it would appear, perhaps unsurprisingly, that the literature represented among the Dead Sea Scrolls exchanges that centrality for a broader notion of “service.” The Jews in the Hellenistic environment are anxious to preserve the unique nature of formal worship while the early rabbis record all manner of meanings of *‘avodah* but are undoubtedly committed to a re-evaluation of how such a concept is to be played out in the practical and everyday expression of Judaism.

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The Garland: A Sign of Worship and Acknowledgement

A Hellenistic Symbol in Late Old Testament Books

Abstract: For Hellenes the garland is a symbol of worship, victory, and honour, a triad highly esteemed in Greek society. The garland plays an important role as an embodiment of these ideals, and it characterizes and impresses Greek identity, at school, in competitions, and also in war. Inevitably the Jewish people, a minority group, were influenced by this attitude in the Hellenistic period. This article presents some evidence and especially Ben Sira's new interpretation of this.

Keywords: Garland; crown; wisdom; education; philosophy; honour; religion; Alexander the Great; Ben Sira; Judith; Hellenistic identity; Jewish identity; Hellenistic culture; society

1 Introduction

The following study deals with the function of the garland at the time when late Old Testament literature was composed. For theologians this topic might appear exceptional at first sight—why is it that the garland, of all things, is chosen as the subject of an article in a collection of papers on worship? We just need to take a look at the texts to explain this: In the Book of Ben Sira *στέφανος*—a term also used in the Hellenistic part of Proverbs (cf. 1:9; 4:9)—is found ten times, i.e. most often as compared to all other biblical books. Presumably Sira—who was occupied with many important subjects in his environment—while travelling came to know and understand the immense significance of the garland in the Hellenistic culture of the time; note his autobiographical comment: “Since a man roamed (*ἄνηρ πεπλανημένος*),¹ he knew many things, and he who is experienced will tell with understanding (*σύνεσιν*)” (Sir 34:9).

¹ In the Greek Bible there are many words for “to wander, to roam;” cf. the most common *πορεύομαι*, besides, even if more rarely, *συμπορεύομαι*, *διοδεύω*, *ἀποδημέω* (cf. *ἀπόδημος*), and in a less precise sense *διέρχομαι* or *ἔρχομαι* and *ὁδοιπορία*. Sira deviates from this usage by choosing *πλανάω*, using *πλανάω* for “to wander, to roam” (Sir 9:7; 34:9,10,12). Because the

As Sira noticed how important the garland was in the Hellenistic world, he discusses it in the second thematically central section at the beginning of his book when he is explaining the term “φόβος κυρίου / fear of the Lord” (Sir 1:11-30). The first verse of the section reads: “Fear of the Lord (φόβος κυρίου) is reputation and boasting, and gladness and a garland of rejoicing (στέφανος ἀγαλλιάματος)” (Sir 1:11). A little later he connects the garland with wisdom: “Wisdom’s garland (στέφανος σοφίας) [is] fear of the Lord (φόβος κυρίου), sprouting peace (εἰρήνην) and perfect health (ὕγιαν ἰάσεως)” (Sir 1:18). Here, the fear of the Lord, understood as wisdom’s garland, is joined with peace and—quite unexpectedly—with health. Some lines after this he includes another topic, namely education (παιδεία), which is important both to Sira² and to Hellenistic culture: “Wisdom (σοφία) and education (παιδεία) are the fear of the Lord (φόβος κυρίου),³ and his delight is fidelity and gentleness” (Sir 1:27). So Sira observes a close connection between the following key-elements in his book: φόβος κυρίου (not φόβος θεοῦ, a word he never ever uses!⁴), σοφία, παιδεία, εἰρήνη, different aspects of fame and honour (δόξα, καύχημα, ἀγαλλίαμα), ὑγίεια and ἴασις with στέφανος. Now it is a question of whether the garland existed at the time when late Old Testament authors were composing their books so that a top-rank wisdom teacher like Ben Sira employs this key-term so often. If so, what were the implications of the garland?

verb, which almost always in Sira means “lead astray, mislead, deceive”, one might ask, how these very different emphases come about. Probably Sira takes “to be restless” (Sir 36:30b [στέναξει πλανώμενος; cf. נַעַן וַיִּרָד, Mss B, C, D]; 51:13) as the primary meaning, which he interprets as an internal restlessness, which may become manifest either in a positive [to roam] or a negative [to mislead, to deceive] dimension. In addition, the Greek translator follows Siracid tradition when he evokes aspects that differ from common usage, as, for example, using פָּחַד in contexts, where you traditionally find אִירָא.

² Cf. REITERER, Pillars, section 4.1.

³ The theological statement in Prov 15:33a G (φόβος θεοῦ) differing from Sira 1:27a proves that Sira does not offer a “quotation” (MARBÖCK, Jesus Sirach, 61). Sir 1:27 employs only Siracid key-terms so that it is unnecessary to look for any literary texts behind it, especially not for one that differs from it in decisive aspects.

⁴ Because of the passages in Sira one does not see why a capable exegete like MARBÖCK, Jesus Sirach, 56, talks about “ca. 55-60 clear combinations of fear / to fear with God or kyrios.” All quotations from German books or articles are presented in English translation.

2 Israel and its traditions in the context of the nations and cultures of its neighbourhood

It is a commonplace of Old Testament exegesis that biblical authors were influenced by their environment. One may note the studies on Akhenaten's Hymn to Aten, the sun's disc, and its impact on Ps 104. Another example is the so-called "Bible-Babel-Conflict," where Delitzsch maintained that passages in the Old Testament were corrupted copies from ancient Near Eastern texts. By comparison some passages in the Old Testament were discovered to be identical with more ancient texts, e.g. with single wisdom sentences. In other cases the difference between ancient Near Eastern texts and Old Testament passages—which was often minimal—provided a clue to the specific and particular character of Old Testament literature. An influence like this is not restricted to the most ancient period. Indeed Corley⁵ has provided a list of numerous themes where Ben Sira parallels Isokrates (436-338 BCE), or at least refers to him. As the Greek rhetorician lived about 150 years earlier than Sira, the two men never met in person. Therefore, Sira must have learnt about him by reading and studying Isokrates' works. While he analysed Scripture—cf. Sir 38:34-39:8 and in the Prologue 0:1-12—he obviously studied some non-biblical books from his environment as well and included their ideas—either approvingly or disapprovingly—in his own writing.

2.1 The attractiveness of Hellenistic education and social organization

Already the introducing words of the Siracid prologue offer some key-terms that are extremely relevant for the entire concern of the book. The prologue says that Israel is to be mentioned with praise for its education and wisdom (ὕπερ ὧν δέον ἐστὶν ἐπαινεῖν τὸν Ἰσραὴλ παιδείας καὶ σοφίας; 0:3). Education (παιδεία) and wisdom (σοφία) had already been most appreciated in "classical" Greece. Education achieved even more importance with the Macedonians Philip and Alexander and in Hellenistic attitudes initiated by them. When the Greeks left the continent and entered on an unparalleled victorious campaign under Alexander's command, the entire social structures had to be re-organized, even re-invented. The former rules within the *polis* could be applied in a few fields only.

5 CORLEY, Gesellschaft, 195-207.

However, rules applied to the sub-structures within the huge empire had their origins for the most part in the organization of the *polis*. For ages, Greek education had been a central affair, inter alia for organizing the *polis* and for training persons for leaders' positions. After the Macedonian, or Hellenistic, change of power a great number of civil servants were needed. These were trained in established institutions: elementary school, gymnasium, and ephebia. Candidates acquired physical training in various disciplines of athletics. That athletics were a central standard may easily be seen by considering that the Olympic Games were the point of reference for the Greek system of chronology. Within Alexander's huge empire, and afterwards also in Seleucid and Ptolemaic kingdoms, communication played a central role for administration, trade, and armed forces. The means of communicating was the Greek-Hellenistic tongue exclusively. Anyone who was not born a Greek could only manage to make a career if he was at home with this new way of life—a fact that is attested also in the Old Testament.

In those days there appeared in Israel men who were breakers of the law, and they seduced many people, saying: "Let us go and make an alliance with the Gentiles all around us (διαθώμεθα διαθήκην μετὰ τῶν ἐθνῶν τῶν κύκλῳ ἡμῶν); since we separated from them, many evils have come upon us (εὗρεν ἡμᾶς κακὰ πολλὰ)." The proposal was agreeable (1 Macc 1:11-12).

Israelites' manner of dealing with the standards of the Hellenistic environment gradually changed. Sira had said that you come to know and understand these phenomena while travelling. Some decades later many Judeans had adopted the Hellenistic spirit and attitudes. Several decades before the events described in 1 Maccabees Sira had established a "bet Midrash" (Sir 51:23) which he had intended to be an alternative to the gymnasium; but the effect of this foundation was obviously limited. The "Greek-Hellenistic" original was much more attractive and opened up access to the high society of that time.

Some from among the people promptly went to the king, and he authorized them (ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν) to introduce the way of living of the Gentiles (ποιῆσαι τὰ δικαιώματα τῶν ἐθνῶν). Thereupon they built a gymnasium (γυμνάσιον) in Jerusalem according to the Gentile custom (κατὰ τὰ νόμιμα τῶν ἐθνῶν) (1 Macc 1:13-14).

Thus, Hellenizing Jews voluntarily adopted Hellenistic ways of life and legal system (τὰ νόμιμα τῶν ἐθνῶν, τὰ δικαιώματα). However, this adoption opened the door to the direct controlling power of Seleucid kings. It was an imitation in miniature of the legal position as control had been in the hands of rulers in Jerusalem since Antiochus III (223-187 BCE). For a long time the Seleucids had

been anxious to snatch Jerusalem and its hinterland from the Ptolemies. In order to win over the Judeans—at least the ruling class in Jerusalem—Antiochus III had granted some rights which were customary to provide administrative areas that had been promoted to a Hellenistic “*polis*” with relative autonomy. By the way, there were no equal rules for any “Hellenistic *polis*” all over the empire as these were established in every single particular case by the highest authority.

2.2 Ambivalence of education and tradition

Greek ways of life were undoubtedly dominant. This fact results from the Hellenes’ political and economic power, but also from the system of education which had been developed systematically. It is also indisputable that many Judeans wanted to join the Hellenists intentionally and energetically, and that they did so. However, Old Testament texts which argue from the religious and social point of view of pious Jews give the impression that this pro-Hellenistic movement was a rather unimportant special problem of only a few fellow Jews. The biblical authors’ angry polemics prove that things were in fact otherwise.

Greek education consisted in dealing in class with the literary works composed by renowned ancestors and implementing their messages in the readers’ actual lives. This is also true for the Old Testament, at least in so far as a person like Ben Sira was entangled by the Greek ideal of education. The (regular) proclamation of the important events from primeval times and the general religious education (cf. e.g. Exod 12:25-28; 13:14-16; Deut 6:20-25; Josh 4:20-22; Ps 78:1-9; Prov 4:1-13) show that Old Testament tradition held similar patterns of fostering tradition. It is striking that the authors of 1 Maccabees, who were interested in history, tried to discover the root of evil—and they found the crucial turning-point in Alexander, the Macedonian. They made out quite correctly that a new, socially influential concept began to develop with his rise, an all-embracing concept that affected religious ideas as well as the way of life.

3 Israel’s experience with foreign rulers

Alexander’s range of action and the effects he produced were not restricted to *one* part of society in those days. The effects extended to education (which he especially emphasized), standards he promoted, and religion: where Alexander

as well as his political heirs and imitators functioned as rulers, Alexandrian or Hellenistic ideals were cultivated.

But why was Israel—a people looking back to centuries of its own history—interested in Greek developments? Israel's existence had been characterized by the influence of super-powers nearly all the time. The Israelites had learnt not only to maintain their identity, but to strengthen and intensify it, while political and military influences were changing. Foreign rulers were interested in the fact that their political-military power was acknowledged. Their economic status was dependent on the imposed tributes and other taxes to a large extent. To deliver these payments was also a sign of acknowledging the foreign ruler. However, the Israelites suffered when they had to raise this kind of taxes. Again and again these claims provoked rebellions which then resulted in new punishing measures. But the rulers did not interfere with the rules of social life and with cult and religion. On the contrary, in the Persian period, when Judah was only a small province,⁶ the Persian king—not unselfishly—supported the internal organization of this province, as he expected to profit from this. Artaxerxes commanded the Judeans to observe the traditional Mosaic law, and he threatened them with several, always severe punishments in case they would not do so:

And you, Ezra, according to the God-given wisdom you possess, appoint magistrates and judges who may judge all the people in the province beyond the River who know the laws of your God; and you shall teach those who do not know them. All who will not obey the law of your God and the law of the king, let judgment be strictly executed on them, whether for death or for banishment or for confiscation of their goods or for imprisonment! (Ezra 7:25-26).

4 Alexander and Jerusalem

A commandment like this is unthinkable with Alexander. Alexander the Great is known in Old Testament scriptures. 1 Maccabees reads like a historical sketch:

After Alexander son of Philip, the Macedonian, who came from the land of Kittim, had defeated King Darius of the Persians and the Medes, he succeeded him as king. (He had previously become king of Greece.) He fought many battles, conquered strongholds, and put to death the kings of the earth. He advanced to the ends of the earth, and plundered many nations. When the earth became quiet before him, he was exalted, and his heart was lifted

⁶ Cf. EGGER-WENZEL, *Provinzen*, 202-203.

up. He gathered a very strong army and ruled over countries, nations, and princes, and they became tributary to him. After this he fell sick and perceived that he was dying. So he summoned his most honored officers, who had been brought up with him from youth, and divided his kingdom among them while he was still alive. And after Alexander had reigned twelve years, he died. Then his officers began to rule, each in his own place. They all put on crowns after his death, and so did their descendants after them for many years; and they caused many evils (κακά) on the earth (1 Macc 1:1-9).

Striving for honour—a formative element of Greek-Hellenistic identity—obviously made an extraordinary impression and was correctly seen as Alexander’s mainspring (1 Macc 1:3 “He advanced to the ends of the earth, and plundered many nations. When the earth became quiet before him, he was exalted, and his heart was lifted up”). Obviously, the author of 1 Maccabees was not aware that striving for honour was an old Greek principle that originated with Achilles: “always to be the best and to remain outstanding as compared to others” (αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων; *Iliad* 6:208 and 11:784). Faced with the choice to live either a long calm life as a king succeeding his father, or a short life that would be remembered and bestow eternal honour on him, Achilles chose the latter, although he knew quite well that this meant to die very soon. But why does the author of 1 Maccabees sum up that Hellenistic kings caused extreme disaster all over the world? These bitter words function as a key for interpreting the entire book of 1 Maccabees, which includes so many horrible events and persecutions. Did Alexander take notice of Jerusalem at all? There is no hint to this in the quotation from 1 Macc.

It is Flavius Josephus⁷ (37-100 CE) who fills in the gap, even though he writes a long time after the author of 1 Maccabees. In accordance with historians’ practice at that time, he added what earlier writers had not mentioned so far. He tells us that Alexander, after the conquest of Damascus and Sidon and while preparing to conquer Tyre and Gaza, wrote a letter to the high priest. In this he demanded that

the Jewish high priest has to send him some auxiliaries, and to supply his army with provisions; and that what presents he formerly sent to Darius, he would now send to him, and choose the friendship (φιλίαν) of the Macedonians, and that he should never repent of so doing (*A.J.* 11.317).

The high priest argued that he would not break any oath (taken before God), and denied Alexander his assistance. Therefore, Alexander, who was still occupied elsewhere, announced his intention that he would “through him teach all

⁷ ECK, Flavius, 163-165.

men to whom they must keep their oaths” (A.J. 11.319). The high priest was frightened when he heard that the Hellenes’ king was advancing. He told the people to pray, he made offerings and in a dream God revealed to him (κατὰ τοὺς ὕπνους ὁ θεὸς θαρρεῖν) “that he should take courage, and adorn the city, and open the gates” (A.J. 11.327). Alexander was surprised at the behaviour and ceremonious procession of the Jerusalemites “and adored that name (προσεκύνησε τὸ ὄνομα), and first greeted the high priest.” (A.J. 11.331). This action stunned his adherents. He answered an officer’s question “... how it came to pass that, when all others adored him (προσκυνούντων αὐτὸν ἀπάντων), he should adore (προσκυνήσειεν) the high priest of the Jews? To whom he replied, ‘I did not adore him (οὐ τοῦτον ... εἶπεν προσεκύνησα), but that God who has honoured him (οὗτος τετίμηται) with his high priesthood’” (A.J. 11.333). The high priest took advantage of that moment and—besides release from taxes—he asked for his permission to maintain “the laws of their forefathers (χρήσασθαι τοῖς πατρίοις νόμοις).” Alexander granted this, not only to the Jews in Jerusalem, but also to those living in Babylonia and Media (A.J. 11.339).

When Flavius Josephus said that Alexander’s grant comprised even regions in Asia *he had not yet conquered*, Josephus was describing his own wishful thinking, not historical reality. Flavius Josephus wanted to prove that rulership over the entire world was promised to Alexander not in Egypt (by the oracles in Siwa and Memphis), but *already in Jerusalem*. Thereby he even surpasses the suggestions given in Gordon, namely the legend that the man “who unravels the knot is destined to become king of the whole world” (βασιλεῖ γενέσθαι τῆς οἰκουμένης)” (Plut. *Alc.* 18.1). According to Flavius Josephus Jerusalem is the turning-point in Alexander’s career! This Alexander, who was worshipped as a god by people on their knees, himself worshipped Israel’s god on his knees—lying prostrate on his knees in front of the person to whom Israel’s god had given a primary rank as a priest. The most important thing is that Flavius Josephus takes it as quite natural that an authority (in this case, God) is worshipped through his representative. It is a similar concept when the author of 1 Maccabees says that Alexander’s successors imitated their outstanding predecessor. This concept of an after-effect—which can be considered either from the starting-point to its sequel or from later phenomena back to the starting-point—becomes a principle which often takes Alexander as the starting-point. The actual model for this concept, though, is Achilles. As an ideal he has an after-effect in the way just described, even when the “ideal ancestor” is not mentioned explicitly.

Unintentionally, Flavius Josephus confirms actual Hellenistic power that cares neither about Israel’s political and social ideas, nor about its religion.

Naturally, in Judah and Jerusalem Hellenistic rulers' claims to power were prevalent—even authorized by Alexander's (fictitious) personal presence. By feigning Alexander's visit to Jerusalem unintentionally Flavius Josephus—or maybe those who probably had invented the episode earlier than Josephus—has proved that Greek law has to be applied with the Jews. This predominance includes all those consequences which unfold during the subsequent troubles and conflicts. Again unintentionally Flavius Josephus authorizes Alexander's unlimited rulership even by *Israel's God*. God is said to have informed Alexander in a visionary dream that he installed him in the office of the world's ruler and “that he would conduct my army, and would give me the dominion over the Persians” (A.J. 11.334).

Moreover, reports about Alexander tell us that Alexander was anxious to gain the favour of a region's gods or the local god; therefore it is not totally improbable that Alexander worshipped “the name” (= YHWH), as Flavius Josephus has it. Obviously, Alexander did not have any theological concept for worshipping: any god and anyone's god were all one to him, it was only important to find *the chief god*. Although Alexander, at least when it agreed with his plans, took more or less note of cultic personnel (cf. Delphi). Thus, he regards the high priest not as a momentous authority, but as the mouthpiece of the people (quite contrary to the first impression one might get). Because of the predominant Hellenistic way of life and legal standards it is important for our purpose to see what ancient authors remark in passing. Flavius Josephus says that the city of Jerusalem *should put on a garland* in order to welcome Alexander on God's—and here this refers clearly to YHWH—demand. So Flavius Josephus confirms that it goes without saying that Israel's god not only noticed a typically Hellenistic custom, namely putting on a garland, but encouraged it actively. As there is no evidence for this in the Bible, it follows that Flavius Josephus had adopted Hellenistic standards as categories of his everyday thinking.

5 The garland

In the Greek-Hellenistic world the garland has a special symbolic impact. As we have seen above, the people of Jerusalem knew about its meaning, and therefore they crowned “the whole city” with garlands when Alexander approached. They could be sure of his good opinion, as they had publicly presented an essential sign of sharing Hellenistic identity and basic opinions. Let us further investigate into the meaning of the garland now.

5.1 The garland in the Book of Judith

The Book of Judith tells us about the decisive battle between the two great kings Arphaxad and Nabuchodonosor [a cipher for Antiochus IV Epiphanes], who were both striving for exclusive power. Holofernes, chief general of Nabuchodonosor's army, tried to bring about an alliance among the western nations, but they refused. From Nabuchodonosor's point of view this was a capital offence which had to be punished as he considered himself lord of all the world (ὁ κύριος πάσης τῆς γῆς). He instructed the chief general (ἀρχιστράτηγον τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ) Holofernes to wage war because the so accused nations had not obeyed "my word" (τῷ ῥήματι τοῦ στόματός μου; Jdt 2:6). He ends his speech to Holofernes with the following words: "And you—take care not to transgress (οὐ παραβῆσῃ) any of your lord's commands (ἐν τι τῶν ῥημάτων τοῦ κυρίου σου), but carry them out exactly as I have ordered you; do it without delay" (2:13). The author is not interested in exact historical or geographic details, but in the dramatic appeal. Nabuchodonosor does not take into account that destroying the crop entirely will also put an end to his own supplies. Nonetheless, he "burned all their fields and destroyed their flocks and herds and sacked their towns and ravaged their lands and put all their young men to the sword (πάντας τοὺς νεανίσκους αὐτῶν ἐν στόματι ῥομφαίας)" (2:27).

On the shore of the Mediterranean Sea Sidon, Tyre, Sur, Ocina, Jamnia, Azotus, and Ascalon (Jdt 2:28) are punished by the campaign. The preparations for the attack horrified the people living on the coast (τοὺς κατοικοῦντας τὴν παραλίαν). These cities sent messengers to Holofernes (3:1) and offered to surrender completely. Their submitting comprised the inhabitants, farms, villages, fields, and cattle. They let Nabuchodonosor know that they lie prostrate before him (παρακείμεθα ἐνώπιόν σου; Jdt 3:2), that is, they *worship* him in a way *that is due only to gods*. If the capitulation is accepted, the inhabitants of the cities will become slaves (οἱ παῖδες; Jdt 3:2 / δοῦλοι; Jdt 3:4) of the Great King. In order to obtain this acceptance, the endangered people ask him thrice, though in varying formulations, to do to them whatever he likes (χρῆσαι ἡμῖν).

(a) "Do with us whatever you will" (καθὼς ἀρεστόν ἐστιν τῷ προσώπῳ σου; Jdt 3:2),

(b) "as you please" (καθὸ ἂν ἀρέσκη σοι; Jdt 3:3),

(c) "deal with them as you see fit" (ὡς ἔστιν ἀγαθὸν ἐν ὀφθαλμοῖς σου; Jdt 3:4).

Under these conditions "law" is no longer important for the persons concerned who are at the powerful's mercy. Note that the Greek actually *tightened up* this rule, namely if someone was taken as "*gained by the spear*." Then not even the rules about how to treat a slave were observed.

The chief general Holofernes originally set out to destroy the nations, he had turned everything topsy-turvy so far, and now he was welcomed by the cities on the Mediterranean shore in the following way: “These people and all in the countryside welcomed him with garlands (μετὰ στεφάνων) and dances (χορῶν) and tambourines (τυμπάνων)” (Jdt 3:7). Considering the events described so far, it was utterly unexpectedly that Holofernes refrained from further reprisals. What was it that had impressed him so much that he did not accomplish the royal order to destroy them, thus putting his own life at stake? Something must have happened which was extraordinary with regard to the nations’ behaviour he had seen so far. Because of this he did not treat them as enemies. The conquered cities acted with regard to the chief general like the Greeks when the latter celebrated the victory of their own general, namely with *garlands* and *dancing*. Holofernes must have had the feeling that compelled him to stay in an area characterized by Hellenistic culture. He does not stay with malevolent enemies, but with like-minded, though stubborn, people. Thus it is understandable that Holofernes did not regard them as potentially dangerous and that he “took picked men (ἄνδρας ἐπιλέκτους) from them as auxiliaries (εἰς συμμαχίαν)” (Jdt 3:6). This implies that they were ready to risk their lives in fighting for their lord Nabuchodonosor, the god. It is well-known that Alexander (and the Greek-Hellenistic rulers after him) recruited an army from many nations and acted according to the pattern described in the Book of Judith. According to Flavius Josephus also the people of Jerusalem strove to be accepted in Alexander’s army, and Alexander agreed.

We return to the Book of Judith: After the Hellenistic welcome ceremony and Holofernes’ rather harmless dealing with the cities on the shore, there follows Holofernes’ attack at the cultic places: “Nevertheless, he devastated their whole territory and cut down (κατέσκαψεν) their sacred groves (τὰ ἄλση αὐτῶν), for he had been commissioned to destroy all the gods of the earth (πάντας τοὺς θεοὺς τῆς γῆς), so that every nation (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) might worship (λατρεύσωσι) Nebuchadnezzar alone, and every people and tribe (πᾶσαι αἱ γλῶσσαι καὶ αἱ φυλαὶ αὐτῶν) invoke (ἐπικαλέσωνται) him as a god (εἰς θεόν)” (Jdt 3:8). As may be gathered from the “rhetorical” question addressed to Achior⁸ and the Israelites (Jdt 6:2), Holofernes is unable to imagine anything else but the divine status of Nabuchodonosor. That is why Achior’s admonishing speech drives him crazy and makes him laugh scornfully:

⁸ For Achior cf. SCHMITZ, Achikar, 19-38; REITERER, Bruders, 146-151.157-159.

Who are you, Achior and you mercenaries of Ephraim, to prophesy among us as you have done today and tell us not to make war against the people of Israel because their God (ὁ θεὸς αὐτῶν) will defend them (ὑπερασπιεῖ)? What god is there (τίς θεὸς εἶ) except Nabuchodonosor? He will send his forces (τὸ κράτος αὐτοῦ) and destroy them from the face of the earth. Their God (αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς αὐτῶν) will not save them (οὐ ῥύσεται) (Jdt 6:2).

Here, the Book of Judith incorporates the crowning with a garland into the field of religion: first the people lie prostrate on their knees before Nabuchodonosor—by having submitted to his representative Holofernes—then they welcome him with garlands and worship Nabuchodonosor alone as god (λατρεύω, ἐπικαλέω, Jdt 3:8).

5.2 Alexander's charisma

Let us return to Alexander the Great, that man who influenced spiritual and intellectual life on almost all levels. Almost every problem connected with him has multiple aspects.

One important aspect of Alexander's self-image was his origin.

Since the 5th century BCE the House of Argead claimed to originate from Zeus by Hercules, the latter being the very embodiment of a man having been deified because of his achievements and ethical purification. On the occasion of the feast at Aigai (336 BCE), Philip II presented an additional 13th (!) effigy besides the ones of the 12 deities, namely his own *theoprepés ... eidolon*; “thus he designated himself as *synthronos* of the 12 deities.” Probably this was not an only temporary identification of the priestly king with Dionysos, but a first attempt at exceeding the limits of humanity.⁹

Alexander may have believed in his mission as a descendant of Heracles and Achilles, even in his divine origin and moreover in his own divinity. At the same time he may have realized and exploited the great propagandistic effects of this and of other irrational motifs.¹⁰

Plutarch narrates that Zeus was involved in the begetting of Alexander; Alexander's mother Olympias told her son so on the occasion of his accession to the throne. This tradition was still alive in Christian time when heathen orators easily called Alexander “son of Zeus” (cf. the rhetor Himeros [12.1] from Athens [320-383 CE]).

⁹ SCHMITT, *Herrscherkult*, 246.

¹⁰ SCHMITT, *Alexander*, 51.

Some episodes from Alexander's life illustrate his self-image. Alexander is keen on living in harmony with the principal deities and on demonstrating this by symbolic actions. One example is that he wanted to be backed up by the Delphic oracle. Because he visited the Pythian priestess on a forbidden day, he had to take her to the sanctuary using violence. On their way the priestess unintentionally uttered the words "you are irresistible, young man!" (Plut. *Alex.* 14.4). At the same moment Alexander let her go, saying that she just gave him what he desired.

What did the young general get? Although the oracle meant to describe the young soldier's impetuous force, Alexander interpreted the statement as a basic revelation about himself or his future career: Delphi's god had confirmed that he was irresistible in the sense of *invincible*. Some scenes that occurred during the crossing of the Hellespont illustrate this self-esteem.

Regarding Alexander's personal religious life, both Plutarch (*Alex.* 23; 25; 50) and Arrianus (*Anab.* VIII 24.4; 25.2) tell us that the first thing he did every morning was to make an offering and that, also at the beginning of any feast in which he participated, he made an offering.¹¹ We may assume that Alexander also acted accordingly before he crossed the Hellespont, an occasion that was the decisive action in his career. So, setting demonstrative signs by accomplishing cultic rituals was a characteristic of Alexander.

(a) According to Herodotus (*Hist.* IX, 116) there existed a sanctuary of Protesilaos where, about 334 BCE, Alexander made an offering before he crossed the Hellespont "as a demonstrative political act intended for the Greek in which he implied his claim to be the successor of this mythic hero. Afterwards he also stepped on the shore of Asia Minor close to the site of Troy."¹² Protesilaos was a Greek hero who commanded 40 black ships and was the first among the Greeks to take up arms against the Trojans. After defeating some Trojans he was killed by Aeneas. He became an object of worship mostly for the fact that he knew that he would die in battle because he had received an oracle saying that the first Greek soldier who entered the shore of Asia Minor would also be the first to die. Because of this oracle all the other Greeks destined to be heroes later on refused to leave their ships. His death transferred Protesilaos to the divine world. Alexander paid homage to this man who had been so courageous and resolute in facing death. In his biography of Alexander, Demandt notes that Alexander and his warriors were determined "at heart to have their blood shed in battle."¹³ By

¹¹ Cf. DEMANDT, Alexander, 374.

¹² Wikiped, Protesilaos.

¹³ DEMANDT, Alexander, 464.

making an offering at the sanctuary of Protesilaos, Alexander also showed that he intended to enter the divine world by heroic deeds.

(b) According to Diodorus Siculus, Alexander derived his claim on Asia and the rest of the world from the gods. When his ship had reached the shore after crossing the Hellespont, upon landing Alexander was the first and only one to throw his spear onto the coast of the continent and he was also the first to disembark. Through this act it was shown by the gods (παρὰ τῶν θεῶν ἀπεφάνετο) that he received Asia as a territory gained by the spear (τῆν Ἀσίαν δέχεσθαι δορίκτητον) (Diodorus Siculus, *Hist.* 17.17.1-2). Then he made an offering to the goddess Athena and to other heroes on the Asian side of the Hellespont. Afterwards he hurried to his ancestor: he anointed the tomb of Achilles (ἀλειψάμενος λίπα); then, accompanied by his comrades he ran there naked (γυμνός), as was the custom. He crowned the tomb with garlands (ἔστεφάνωσε) and called Achilles a happy man because he had a true friend while he was alive and a great herald (μεγάλου κήρυκος) of his heroic deeds after death (Plutarch, *Alex.* 15).

(c) It is quite clear that Alexander worshipped his (presumed) ancestor with a crown. Moreover, the two events described above show Alexander's self-image: he is more courageous than Protesilaos; he defies risking his own life and does not die in battle; he appreciates Achilles by worshipping him, both when still alive as a reliable friend (φίλου πιστοῦ), and also when dead as a herald of his own heroic deeds. In his narrative Plutarch implies that Alexander regarded himself as Achilles' equal and as being worthy of being worshipped at a sanctuary himself. His heroic deeds will take him to the divine world by analogy to his ancestor. During his campaign through Asia Alexander had installed an altar in his tent where incense was burnt; his men who were inside his tent had to worship both him and the altar on their knees; afterwards they were allowed to kiss this "superman." At about the same time Alexander, like his father Philip, had a bust representing him erected in addition to the twelve deities in Athens beside an altar. The latter was destroyed soon after Alexander's death. However, there is testimony that Alexander was worshipped cultically throughout the eras of Ptolemaic, Seleucid and Hasmonean rulers and "still in Roman times, too. Alexander's birthday used to be celebrated as a high festival even in the 4th century CE."¹⁴

The garland becomes a symbol of acknowledging sovereignty—on different levels.

14 DEMANDT, *Alexander*, 418.

Arrianus mentions that Alexander crowned himself with garlands when he made offerings, as a quite natural fact (Arrian, *Anab.* 26). Thus Alexander proved in public that he recognized these deities. Whoever had surrendered to Alexander was spared.

This also happened to those who went to encounter him with green branches in their hands or who even sent him golden crowns. ... He strived to be recognized and appreciated, and for that intention he risked his life like no other general.¹⁵

It is reported quite often that his supremacy was acknowledged by giving him crowns. “Already during his march from Tyros to Gaza 15 ambassadors of the Corinthian Union joined him in order to congratulate him on his victory at Issos by presenting him with a golden crown; according to Diodorus XVII 48,6.”¹⁶ Even elephants (which were regarded as the most intelligent animals as they were pious and worshipped the stars¹⁷) are said to have honoured and worshipped Alexander by falling on their knees and offering him garlands.¹⁸ Even after his death Alexander was worshipped in this way. When Augustus had conquered Alexandria in 30 BCE., the inhabitants of the city were afraid that something horrible would happen to them, but Augustus spared Alexandria because he esteemed and honoured her founder. He had the mummy of the Macedonian prince brought before him and worshipped him by presenting him with flowers and a golden crown (Plutarch, *Ant.* 36).

Alexander himself used to decorate his inferior with crowns: “He honoured his commanders-in-chief with golden crowns, such as Nearchos, and likewise Peukestas who had protected him, further Leonnatos, who had defeated the Oreiti, Hephastion and other body-guards.”¹⁹

Alexander became an example and stimulated others “to imitate him”²⁰ which may also be seen in Biblical texts. A passage on the Seleucid King Balas (145-140 BCE.) reads:

“King Alexander to his brother Jonathan, greetings. We have heard about you, that you are a mighty warrior and worthy to be our friend. And so we have appointed you today to be the high priest of your nation; you are to be called the king’s friend and you are to take

15 DEMANDT, Alexander, 464.

16 DEMANDT, Alexander, 179.

17 In India elephants were the only creatures thought to be equivalent to human being.

18 Cf. Strabo XV 705; Plinius, *Nat.* VIII 1 ff; Plutarch, *Alex.* 60; Aelian, *Nat. an.* II 11; III 46; IV 10; 24; XVII 12; 24.

19 DEMANDT, Alexander, 330.

20 DEMANDT, Alexander, 407.

our side and keep friendship with us.” He also sent him a purple robe and a golden crown (στέφανον χρυσοῦν) (1 Macc 10:18-20).

5.3 The social function of the garland

In order to better understand the Hellenistic view of life it is important to assess the significance of physical training and sports. The *gymnasion* was primarily an institution for the physical training of young men. To this central purpose other fields of learning were added, e.g. reading, writing, and rhetorical practice. The trainees worked incessantly, strove to surpass their school-mates and to become the best of all according to the ideal given in Homer’s *Iliad* (6.208; 11.784). At the end of the term there were contests; which resulted in a single ultimate winner. There is a religious background to this ritual because, according to ancient custom, a deity was patron of the contests. The boys and young men did not receive a school-report, but a garland, the symbol of honour: *honour*—beside *justice*—being the most important standards in Greek Hellenistic thinking. The following example may serve as an illustration.

Plato invented an extraordinarily wise woman endowed with the ability to answer those questions and to explain the correlations of ideas. In this respect she surpassed even Socrates.

Diotima, the exceedingly wise woman (ᾧ σοφωτάτη Διοτίμα; Plato, *Symp.* 208b) in Plato’s *Symposion*, sums up *the aim of human striving* in the word φιλοτιμία—so it is all about “love for honour” or “striving for honour.” Diotima states that man has “an exceeding *desire* to become famous, to achieve immortal fame and to take any risk in dangerous adventures (ἔρωτι τοῦ ὀνομαστοῖ γενέσθαι καὶ κλέος ἔς τὸν αἰεὶ χρόνον ἀθάνατον καταθέσθαι καὶ ὑπὲρ τούτου κινδύνους τε κινδυνεύειν ἔτοιμοί εἰσι πάτας;” *Symp.* 208c) in order to gain everlasting fame and final permanent remembrance (ἀθάνατον κλέος καὶ μνήμην; *Symp.* 209d).²¹

Philostratus tells us that Arrichion, the Pancratiast,²² “died victoriously and was crowned with a garland by the Olympian umpire ... though it is certainly splendid that he had won the Olympic Games twice, but it is even more splendid that he achieved victory at the price of his life.” This example demonstrates that being honoured with a garland may transcend the sphere of the living. In addition, it becomes clear that life is less valuable than persevering in a competition,

²¹ REITERER, *Wir wollen*, 185f.

²² Philostratus, *Imagines* 2.6.

and especially even less valuable than victory. For instance, consider that Theogenes of Thasos was worshipped as a god, after his death, with offerings—because he had achieved many victories; he had been especially successful at boxing in Olympia (480 BCE) and at the Pancration (476 BCE). Pausanias²³ and Lucian²⁴ attest “Greeks from other towns as well as non-Greeks attributed to him magic powers to heal diseases.”²⁵ This shows that courage, exemplified in despising death and fighting to the point of risking one’s life, enable a man to prevail over physical weakness. The hero, who in fighting faces death again and again, could become a θεῖος ἀνὴρ, who owned healing power and could heal men’s physical illness. Mentioning the garland and healing has a religious dimension against this background.

The greed for the crown has an effect like a drug. Philo²⁶ writes:

I know that wrestlers and Pancratiasts often carry on to their end (ἄχρι τῆς τοῦ βίου τελευτῆς) out of ambition and desire for being victorious (ὑπὸ φιλοτιμίας καὶ τῆς εἰς τὸ νικᾶν σπουδῆς), even though their body is giving up and they keep on breathing only by the energy of their soul and keep on fighting as they are wont to overcome any fear (τῶν φοβερῶν ἐγκατεροῦσιν). The athletes consider dying for a garland of olive-leaves or celery to be honourable (ἀλλὰ γὰρ οὖν κοτίων μὲν χάριν καὶ σελίων εὐκλεῆς ἀγωνισταῖς ἢ τελευτῇ).

To earn a garland or a crown was the very gist of aspiration; the contests which rendered it possible to gain a garland may be called “the holy games of the garland.”²⁷

The transition from sports to war is slight. To put it with the classic historians Diodorus Siculus (*Hist.* XVIII 39,5) and Arrian (*Anab.* VII 4,2): corresponding to “the agonal [derived from ἀγών, *competition*{*celebrated*}] concept of the Greeks who regarded war as competition and victory as a divine gift,”²⁸ transitions are slight. As in many a competition, the Greeks risk their lives during war. Survival is a divine signal that the gods helped their protégés—just as the *Iliad* described how men were rescued by the gods very often. As in sports the garland gains essential symbolic import also in the military context.

²³ Pausanias, *Graeciae description* 6.11.9.

²⁴ Lucian, *Deorum Concilium* 12.

²⁵ POLIAKOFF, *Kampfsport*, 168.

²⁶ Philon, *Prob.* 1:110,113.

²⁷ POLIAKOFF, *Kampfsport*, 32.

²⁸ DEMANDT, *Alexander*, 110.