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Judaism and Hellenism in 2 Maccabees

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Abstract 2 Maccabees, the first work to pose an opposition between Judaism and Hellenism, sees Hellenism as a new kind of threat in Jewish history. Previously, foreign cultures were perceived as dangerous because of the temptation posed by their gods. But for 2 Maccabees, Hellenism involves a system of values distinct from idolatry, the values associated with the gymnasium. 2 Maccabees condemns Jews who adopt these values even as they remain loyal to the God of Israel. Yet 2 Maccabees itself shows the influence of Hellenism in many ways. This article considers particularly its descriptions of the martyrs and other heroes, which employ a vocabulary of praise drawn from Greek culture rather than the biblical tradition. Yet 2 Maccabees artfully deemphasizes the associations of this language with the gymnasium and physical culture. For example, the martyrs with their passive courage are called noble, a term frequently used in Greek literature of warriors, while the category of gentlemanliness, a characteristic Greek value, is applied to elderly men who could not possibly participate in the characteristic sphere of the Greek gentleman, the gymnasium. Thus 2 Maccabees does not simply borrow but rather transforms these Greek categories as it integrates them into Judaism.

2 Maccabees, an account of the Jewish rebellion led by Judah Maccabee against the Seleucid king Antiochus IV in the middle of the second century B.C.E., is the first text to present Judaism and Hellenism as opposing categories. In order to describe the confrontation between the way of life of the Jews and the way of life of the Greeks during the crisis that pre-

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ceded the revolt and during the revolt itself, the author of 2 Maccabees invented the term *Ioudaismos* and used the term *Hellenismos*, which had previously referred only to language, in a new way (Habicht 1974: 98; Hengel 1974, 1: 1–2). Yet, as many students have noted, 2 Maccabees itself combines these antithetical categories: It is at once Jewish in its piety and Greek in its mode of expression. Thus Elias Bickerman, who inaugurated a new era in the study of the Maccabean revolt, refers to 2 Maccabees' "synthesis of narrowly orthodox theology with the most powerful hellenistic rhetoric" (1930, 14: 792; quoted approvingly by Hengel 1974, 1: 98).¹ More recently, Christian Habicht writes, "The uniqueness of 2 Maccabees lies in the fact that the book is characterized by two apparently contradictory features. . . . From the point of view of the history of theology, the book is purely Jewish; from the point of view of the history of literature, primarily Greek" (Habicht 1976b: 185, my translation).

Habicht is correct to characterize the Jewish and Greek features of 2 Maccabees as "*apparently* contradictory" (my emphasis), although unfortunately he does not develop this observation.² My goal here is to illumine the nature of the relationship between Judaism and Hellenism in 2 Maccabees by describing it with greater precision. I begin by discussing the understanding of Hellenism and its confrontation with Judaism found in 2 Maccabees. I then turn to the relationship between Judaism and Hellenism that is reflected in the work itself, a relationship both more complicated and more cordial than 2 Maccabees' rhetoric of opposition suggests.

2 Maccabees is one of two histories of the Maccabean revolt to have come down to us from antiquity. The other is 1 Maccabees; despite the traditional nomenclature, the two texts are independent works.³ 1 Maccabees

1. Oddly, in the English translation of *Judaism and Hellenism*, the word *Hellenistic* is omitted from the translation of Bickerman's description.

2. He does, however, note that the Greek literary form of 2 Maccabees represents more than superficial Greek influence (Habicht 1974: 108–9; 1976b: 189–90).

3. In addition to these histories, two other books entitled *Maccabees* survive. 3 Maccabees has nothing at all to do with the Maccabees. It seems to have received its title because its themes, persecution and miraculous deliverance, are similar to those of 1 and 2 Maccabees, but it is set in Alexandria, and the persecution, by one of the Ptolemies, is legendary rather than historical. Like 2 Maccabees, 3 Maccabees expresses its disdain for the Greek ruler in good Greek style, indeed in a style somewhat similar to that of 2 Maccabees, although the conventions of 3 Maccabees are those of romance rather than of history. It should also be noted that the Ptolemy's persecution of his Jewish subjects is set in motion when his attempt to enter the holy of holies in the Jerusalem temple is met by a divine defense that leaves him near death, a story with obvious parallels to the tale of Heliodorus' failed attempt to empty the temple of its treasure, with which 2 Maccabees opens. 3 Maccabees is usually dated to the first century B.C.E., but a date in the first century C.E. is also possible (see, e.g., Schürer 1986: 537–42).

4 Maccabees is a discourse in praise of reason; its understanding of Jewish piety is informed by Stoic and Platonic philosophy, and its primary exemplars of pious submission to

is a dynastic history—propaganda for the Hasmonean family, Israel's new high priests and rulers. While 2 Maccabees restricts itself to the persecution of Antiochus and Judah's revolt, concluding with Judah's defeat of Nicanor, the Seleucid governor of Judea under Demetrius I, 1 Maccabees covers a longer period. It devotes considerable attention to Mattathias, the father of the Maccabee brothers and founder of the line, and, after recounting the revolt led by Judah and Judah's death, it goes on to describe the reigns of his brothers Jonathan and Simon, concluding with the reign of Simon's son John Hyrcanus. The passing of power to the next generation establishes the Hasmoneans as a dynasty. 1 Maccabees compares its heroes to the great heroes of Israel's past: Mattathias is implicitly identified with Phinehas, Aaron's grandson and the recipient of a special priestly covenant, while Judah is depicted as a new David.

1 Maccabees reaches us only in Greek and in translations from the Greek, but it was composed in Hebrew. Its style and plan imitate the biblical histories, particularly the books of Judges and Samuel (e.g., Bickerman 1979 [1937]: 95; Abel 1949: xxiii–xxiv). The choice of biblical literary models and the use of Hebrew rather than Aramaic reflect conscious archaizing in the service of 1 Maccabees' praise of the Hasmoneans (Schwartz 1995: 26). This turn toward the great tradition of the past is one characteristic mode of Hellenistic literary expression among Greeks and others as well as among Jews (see the suggestive comments in Schwartz 1995: 29–31).

2 Maccabees' more limited chronological focus precludes the dynastic concerns of 1 Maccabees, and it pays little attention to Judah's family.⁴ 1 Maccabees describes the victories of its heroes according to the pattern of the biblical traditions of holy war; but while God's role in the victories is clear, it is worked out through human agents. 2 Maccabees, on the other hand, introduces divine "manifestations" into its account of some of the Jewish victories. It also devotes considerable attention to the martyrs, who are mentioned only briefly in 1 Maccabees, emphasizing their role in securing the divine favor required for the Maccabees' victory.

2 Maccabees was written in Greek in an elevated and highly rhetorical

the dictates of reason are the martyrs whose stories are told in 2 Maccabees 6–7. Like 2 and 3 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees was composed in Greek. The work is usually dated to the first century C.E. (Schürer 1986: 588–93).

4. Jonathan Goldstein sees in this lack of attention a rejection of the claims of the Hasmoneans, 2 Maccabees as a polemic against 1 Maccabees (1976: 64–89; 1983: 17–19, 82–83). Robert Doran, who dates 2 Maccabees by what he perceives as opposition to the policies of John Hyrcanus I, rejects Goldstein's position (1981: 112, especially n. 11; see also Tcherikover 1974 [1959]: 383).

style, and it provides the only complete example to survive of the pathetic mode of writing history that was popular during the Hellenistic period. As it has come down to us, it is the end product of a rather complicated literary process. It presents itself as the epitome of a five-volume history by an otherwise unknown historian, Jason of Cyrene (2:19–32). Scholars have devoted a great deal of attention to the question of narrative sources for 2 Maccabees.⁵ A considerable body of scholarship believes in such sources, though the scholars rarely agree on the nature of these sources, most of them no longer extant, or on the manner of use (e.g., Bickerman 1979 [1937]: 9–23; Schunck 1954; Bunge 1971; Goldstein 1976: 37–54, 90–103; 1983: 35–41; Habicht 1976b: 172–77). I agree with Doran that no evidence exists for such sources “in the technical sense” (1981: 12–23; quotation, 23).⁶

The epitomator tells us that his purpose was to make Jason’s lengthy account more accessible by condensing and ornamenting it (2:24–31). He compares his own contribution to 2 Maccabees to that of the painter responsible for decorating a house (2:29), suggesting that the rhetorical flourishes are his. With the loss of Jason’s work, we have only the epitomator’s word to go on in evaluating the relationship of 2 Maccabees to its source, but I think there are some grounds for arguing that Jason himself was the source of much of the pathos and rhetoric of 2 Maccabees. It is true that some scenes in 2 Maccabees are written in a far more elaborate rhetorical style than others,⁷ but to a considerable extent the different styles reflect the subject matter of the passages. The rather hurried conclusion of the work, which fails to exploit the melodramatic potential of the martyrdom of Razis, for example, suggests that the epitomator omitted elements of the original in the process of abridging it.⁸

In its present form 2 Maccabees is prefaced by two letters sent by the Jews of Jerusalem to the Jews of Egypt, urging them to observe the festival commemorating the rededication of the temple by the Maccabees after its liberation from the forces of Antiochus. The first letter contains the date of its own composition, 124 B.C.E., but this is not necessarily the date of the

5. The four letters included in chapter 11 clearly constitute sources, but not narrative sources; they are widely recognized as authentic (e.g., Bickerman 1930, 14: 789, with references to earlier scholars; see the detailed examination in Habicht 1976a: 178–79).

6. My discussion of the story of the mother and her seven sons below bears on Habicht’s view of chapter 7 as drawn from a different source (Habicht 1976b: 176–77).

7. For an elaborate attempt to distinguish the rhetorical additions of the epitomator from the more prosaic narrative of Jason, see Zeitlin and Tedeschi 1954: 20–24. Like the other points Solomon Zeitlin argues here, for example, that the epitomator was a Jew from Antioch, this attempt is clever but not persuasive.

8. For discussion of other examples of abridgment, see Abel 1949: xxxiii–xxxiv, xxxvi, especially n. 1.

body of 2 Maccabees, for the letters could have been joined to the already completed work by a third party (Doran 1981: 3–12).⁹

Whatever conclusion we come to about the relation between the letters and the rest of 2 Maccabees, there are good grounds for viewing Jason as a contemporary of the events he describes; if so, the middle of the second century would be a plausible date for his work (e.g., Tcherikover 1974 [1959]: 382–85). The epitomator must have completed his work before the arrival of Pompey and the Romans in Jerusalem in 63 B.C.E. since 2 Maccabees concludes with the claim that Jerusalem had remained in Jewish hands from the time of Judah on (15:37).

From the time of the return from the Babylonian exile, under both the Persians and the Hellenistic empires, the high priest had served as the head of the Jewish people in the eyes of the foreign ruler. According to 2 Maccabees, the events that led to the Maccabean revolt were set in motion by the efforts of the evil Jason to seize the high priesthood from his pious brother, Onias III. With the accession to the throne of Antiochus IV, Jason undertook to persuade the new Seleucid king to appoint him high priest in his brother's place. As an inducement to Antiochus, Jason offered not only a down payment and the promise of future payments for the office itself, but also a payment in return for permission "to establish a gymnasium . . . and a body of youth for it, and to enroll the men of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch" (4:9).¹⁰ Jason's promises were well received, and he returned to Jerusalem as Antiochus IV's designated high priest.

The meaning of the last provision, the right to enroll the men of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch, has been the subject of considerable discussion.¹¹ Here I follow Victor Tcherikover's view, but in fact the precise nature of the new situation in Jerusalem is not crucial to my argument. In Tcherikover's

9. The first letter is quite brief (1:1–9); it greets the Jews of Egypt and summarizes an earlier letter that explained the reasons for the festival. The second letter is considerably longer (1:10–2:18) and includes a review of temple dedications in Israel's past. Several scholars suggest that the epitome was composed to be sent with the first letter and that the date of the letter thus provides a date for the epitome, though not for the work of Jason of Cyrene (Momigliano 1975: 83; Habicht 1976b: 174). But the letter itself is very brief and provides no notice of the existence of the epitome, nor does its version of the history of the festival fit well with the account in 2 Maccabees.

10. All quotations from 1 and 2 Maccabees and the Bible are taken from the Revised Standard Version (RSV) translation, unless otherwise indicated.

11. Even the translation is controversial. RSV's translation, quoted above, follows the understanding of Tcherikover (1974 [1959]: 404–7). See Bickerman 1979 [1937]: 38–40 for a different understanding. The translations of Goldstein (1983), "to draw up the list of the Antiochenes in Jerusalem," and Habicht (1976b), "die Liste derer aufzustellen, die in Jerusalem Bürger von Antiocheia sein sollten," are close to Bickerman's understanding, although Goldstein proposes his own theory of the meaning of Antiochene citizenship (1976: 110–22).

view, Jason was granted the right to turn Jerusalem into a new legal entity, a polis known like so many other cities in the Seleucid empire as Antioch.¹² Upon his conquest of Palestine, Antiochus III had granted the Jews the right to live according to their ancestral customs; with the establishment of a new legal basis for the governance of Jerusalem, the Torah was no longer the constitution of the city. Still, the establishment of the polis did not mean that the practice of Jewish customs was forbidden or discouraged, only that they were no longer the legal basis for the governance of the city (Tcherikover 1974 [1959]: 161–69, 404–9; Hengel 1974, 1: 278–79).¹³

The changes that took place upon Jason's return from his successful interview with the king had a profoundly negative effect, in the view of 2 Maccabees.

He destroyed the lawful ways of living and introduced new customs contrary to the law. For with alacrity he founded a gymnasium right under the citadel, and he induced the noblest of the young men to wear the Greek hat. There was such an extreme of Hellenization and increase in the adoption of foreign ways because of the surpassing wickedness of Jason, who was ungodly and no high priest, that the priests were no longer intent upon their service at the altar. Despising the sanctuary and neglecting the sacrifices, they hastened to take part in the unlawful proceedings in the wrestling arena after the call to the discus, disdaining the honors prized by their fathers and putting the highest value upon Greek forms of prestige. (4:11–15)

The word translated as “Hellenization” in the Revised Standard Version is *Hellenismos*. I would prefer to translate it as “Hellenism” since 2 Maccabees clearly intends it to serve as the opposite of *Ioudaismos*. As noted above, this use of *Hellenismos* to mean the Greek way of life appears to be the coinage of 2 Maccabees.

For 2 Maccabees, *Hellenismos* is defined by the gymnasium and the behavior associated with it. We hear nothing in the passage quoted above or

12. A similar development from non-Greek city to polis appears to be attested for Sardis (Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993: 180–84). Citizenship in any polis was limited; in Jason's Jerusalem, it was apparently restricted to the aristocrats, and the path to citizenship for the young was membership in the ephebate, “the body of youth.” Most inhabitants of Jerusalem, too poor to bear the costs of the associated education, would have remained mere residents, *metoikoi* (metics) or *katoikoi* in the terminology of the polis.

13. Tcherikover developed his interpretation against the groundbreaking work of Bickerman. Bickerman argued that Jason received permission to form a corporation of Antiochenes, composed of the Jerusalem elite; the rest of the inhabitants of Jerusalem remained subject to the ancestral laws, while the Antiochenes now lived by Greek laws (1979 [1937]: 38–42; for annotation, see German original). Goldstein's suggestion that Jason's project reflects Antiochus IV's adoption of a Roman notion of citizenship (1976: 110–22) has not met with acceptance.

anywhere else in 2 Maccabees about the introduction of the cult of Greek gods to Jerusalem before Antiochus' persecution (Tcherikover 1974 [1959]: 165–67; Bringmann 1983: 83; Will and Orrieux 1986: 119; against Bickerman 1979 [1937]: 41). Yet while the Torah, not surprisingly, has nothing to say about the gymnasium or “the proceedings of the wrestling arena,” 2 Maccabees claims that participation in the life of the gymnasium involves “customs contrary to the law” (*paranomous ethismous*) (4:11). If, as 1 Maccabees claims, those who participated in the gymnasium tried to remove the evidence of their circumcision (1:15), such participation might be termed “unlawful.” But 2 Maccabees does not mention the attempt to reverse circumcision, nor does it complain that the aristocratic youth of Jerusalem exercised naked, which would also clearly be contrary to the laws of the Torah. The failure to mention such behavior strongly suggests that 2 Maccabees did not believe it had taken place (Goldstein 1983: 230). But for 2 Maccabees, and surely for other opponents of the reforms as well, the force of the law went far beyond the written Torah. “The laws” (*hoi nomoi*), or less frequently, “the law” (*ho nomos*), serves in 2 Maccabees as a designation for the Jewish way of life, elsewhere *Ioudaismos*, which stands in contrast to *Hellenismos*¹⁴ (see Renaud 1961: 55–67 for discussion of *nomos/nomoi*; Renaud's position is treated below). Thus 2 Maccabees describes the tranquility that reigned in Jerusalem before the conflict in relation to the laws: “The holy city was inhabited in unbroken peace and the laws were very well observed” (3:1). This understanding of the laws also leads to describing the establishment of the gymnasium as involving “customs contrary to the law” (4:11).

Despite its tone and its insistence that the gymnasium brought with it behavior that violated the Torah, 2 Maccabees gives us no evidence for its view that Jason's followers were disloyal to the God of Israel. If Jason and his friends held a more limited view of the demands of the Torah than

14. 2 Maccabees never applies the terms *nomos* and *nomoi* to anything but the Jewish law. Other terms are occasionally applied to Jewish laws or customs: *ethos* (11:25), *ethismos* (12:38), and *nomimos* (4:11, 11:24). It is worth noting that two of the uses of these other terms appear in the letter of Antiochus V to the Jews. Whether this document is genuine or not, it is not the work of the author of 2 Maccabees, who accepted its authenticity. In any case *nomos/nomoi* is far and away the dominant term for Jewish law and custom in 2 Maccabees. The most common use of the terms is without any modification, simply “the laws” or “the law.”

Forms of *nomos* appear twenty-four times in 2 Maccabees outside of the preliminary letters, eighteen times in the plural (2:22; 3:1; 4:2, 17; 5:8, 15; 6:1, 5, 28; 7:2, 9, 11, 23, 37; 8:2, 36; 11:31; 13:14), and six times in the singular (6:1; 7:30; 10:26; 12:40; 13:10; 15:9). (The term appears in two other passages, 5:10 and 7:24, in one of the two main witnesses to 2 Maccabees, but in both places it is the inferior reading.)

All statistics for the occurrence of words in 2 Maccabees and other texts of the Greek Bible are drawn from Hatch and Redpath 1983 [1897].

2 Maccabees, they could embrace Greek institutions such as the gymnasium with a good conscience as long as the cult of the Lord was maintained as it always had been (Tcherikover 1974 [1959]: 165–67; Goldstein 1983: 85–87; Will and Orrieux 1986: 134–36). The account in 2 Maccabees of the fate of the donation Jason sent to Tyre lends support to the view that the reformers were not disloyal to the laws as they understood them. Jason, 2 Maccabees tells us, intended the donation to be used for the sacrifices to Hercules at the games, but the messengers charged with delivering it, who were drawn from the Antiochenes in Jerusalem, found this use of the money unacceptable and gave it instead for the construction of triremes (4:18–20).¹⁵ Thus while 2 Maccabees claims that Jason had moved beyond the limits of Jewish monotheism, it grants that the messengers, who were Antiochenes and thus members of the gymnasium elite, had no intention of abandoning Judaism and rejected Jason's course (Tcherikover 1974 [1959]: 166–67; Bringmann 1983: 83; Goldstein 1983: 232–33; Will and Orrieux 1986: 136).¹⁶

In the Hebrew Bible, the Deuteronomic tradition and many of the prophets looked for evidence of idolatry to explain Israel's defeats and suffering at the hands of her neighbors. 1 Maccabees stands close to the biblical tradition. While no instances of idolatry are described before the persecution, we are told that the lawless men who introduced the gymnasium and removed the marks of circumcision "abandoned the holy covenant" (1:15). 1 Maccabees also indicates that many Jews were happy to adopt the worship of the gods of the Greeks at the time of Antiochus' decree (1:43); indeed it uses the willingness of these Jews to sacrifice to the Greek gods as a foil to the zealous piety of Mattathias (2:15–28).

For 2 Maccabees, Antiochus' prohibition of the practice of Judaism and the terrible persecution that followed are punishment not for idolatry, but for the gymnasium. And 2 Maccabees does not attempt to underline the greatness of its martyrs, who it sees as heroes of the revolt equal to Judah and his men, by emphasizing the willingness of other Jews to save their lives by worshiping foreign gods. The failure of some Jews to resist the persecution is glimpsed only occasionally, as, for example, when Judah

15. See Wacholder 1974: 15–16, for an interesting discussion of how this incident may have affected Eupolemus and his account of the donation of Solomon to the temple of Zeus in Tyre.

16. Goldstein suggests that the donation was simply the standard entrance fee for participation in the games, which usually was used to pay for sacrifices to the god in whose honor the games were being held. Thus, even Jason might not have viewed the contribution as idolatrous: He was simply paying the required fee, and it was in the hands of the sponsors of the games to determine how the money was to be used (1983: 232–33).

gathers to him those men “who had continued in the Jewish faith (*Ioudaismos*) . . . , about six thousand men” (8:1). The only instance of even attempted idolatry in the account of the period before the persecution is Jason’s failed attempt to donate money for sacrifices to Hercules at the games at Tyre; even if Jason’s contribution had been used for the purpose intended, it hardly represents a very ardent form of idolatry.

Once we recognize that the gymnasium did not bring idolatry with it, 2 Maccabees’ real complaint becomes clear: The gymnasium represents new values. With its establishment, the youthful flower of the Jerusalem priesthood, the heirs of Aaron, no longer defined success in traditional terms, but rather in Greek terms, that is, in terms of athletic prowess: “Despising the sanctuary and neglecting the sacrifices, they hastened to take part in the unlawful proceedings in the wrestling arena after the call to the discus, disdaining the honors prized by their fathers and putting the highest value upon Greek forms of prestige” (4:14–15). The almost comical picture of the young priests abandoning the altar as they rush to train for competition in the games is surely meant to recall the crowd of priests around the altar not many years earlier when Heliodorus threatened to violate the sanctity of the temple: “The priests prostrated themselves before the altar in their priestly garments and called toward heaven” (3:15). In 2 Maccabees’ view, Hellenism is not evil in itself. Rather, it is bad for Jews because it leads them away from their proper way of life.

From one angle, the evil of innovation at the core of 2 Maccabees’ objection to Hellenism is part of an old story. In his farewell to the people of Israel in the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses predicts that they will go astray by worshipping “gods their fathers knew not, who were not apportioned to them” (29:25). Similarly, God complains through Jeremiah that the people are burning incense to gods neither “they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah knew” (19:4. See also Deuteronomy 32:17; Jeremiah 44:3). What is different about Hellenism is that it promotes dangerous innovation without actual idolatry.

While the Bible describes idolatry as the worship of gods one’s fathers did not know, it has no term to express its belief that piety is inherited from the fathers. In 2 Maccabees, adjectives meaning “ancestral” are prominent (Renaud 1961: 63–64). In three instances, 2 Maccabees refers to the laws as “ancestral,” (*patrios* or *patrōs*).¹⁷ This usage may echo Seleucid usage:

17. 2 Maccabees usually refers to “the laws” and “the law” without any modifiers; when they are modified, it is usually to associate them with God. Forms of *nomos* appear without an adjective in twelve instances (2:22; 3:1; 4:2; 5:8, 15; 6:5; 8:21; 10:26; 12:40; 13:10, 14; 15:9). In seven instances they appear in association with God (4:17 [divine laws]; 6:1 [God’s law]; 7:9, 11, 23 [his laws]; 7:30 [law given to our fathers through Moses]; 8:36 [laws ordained

The decree of Antiochus III upon his conquest of the territory of the Jews grants them the right to continue to live “according to their ancestral laws” (*kata tous patrious nomous*) (Josephus *Antiquities* 12:142; Bickerman 1980 [1935]: 69–71). But the phrase was not peculiar to the Seleucid royal chancellery, and its use was not restricted to the Jews: In 201 B.C.E., Philip V of Macedon granted the inhabitants of the recently conquered island of Nisyros the right to continue to use their ancestral laws (*nomois tois patriois*) (Bickerman 1980 [1935]: 70–71; for two examples of papyri that use the phrase *ancestral law* in the singular, see Renaud 1961: 63–64). 2 Maccabees also uses these adjectives for *ancestral* and a third, etymologically distinct, adjective, *progonikos*, in relation to other significant nouns, such as *honors* (4:15) and *government* (8:17), and most notably, to *language* (7:8, 21, 27; 12:37; 15:29), a subject to which I shall return.¹⁸ The three adjectives for *ancestral* are virtually absent from the books of the Greek Bible that are translated from Hebrew;¹⁹ indeed, as I just noted, there is no comparable term in the Hebrew Bible. While these adjectives appear a few times in other books of the Greek Bible that were composed in Greek, the large majority of the instances are found in 2 Maccabees and 4 Maccabees, which drew on 2 Maccabees.²⁰ The importance of these terms for 2 Maccabees suggests how times have changed since Deuteronomy and Jeremiah: The inherited is no longer taken for granted, but needs to be made explicit.

For 2 Maccabees, then, Hellenism is a threat to traditional values. It is

by him]). Perhaps 6:28 (“solemn and holy laws”) should also be included here. A letter of Antiochus V refers to “their own laws” (11:31). Designation of the laws as “ancestral” (6:1; 7:2, 37) does not imply doubt about their divine origin, as is clear from the dominance of the association of the laws with God and, in one case, the juxtaposition of the “ancestral laws” with “God’s law” in a single sentence (6:1).

18. *Patrios* and *patrōos* together appear thirteen times in 2 Maccabees (4:15; 5:10; 6:1, 6; 7:2, 8, 21, 24, 27, 37; 12:37, 39; 15:29). But at several points the two major witnesses to 2 Maccabees, ms. A and R, the sixteenth-century Sixtine edition, differ in the terms they offer. Thus in what follows I treat the two adjectives together and do not attempt to distinguish between them. Liddel, Scott, and Jones 1968, s.v. *patrōos*, suggests a distinction in Attic prose usage: *Patrios* describes customs and institutions; *patrōos*, possessions. But despite Doran’s findings about 2 Maccabees’ attention to the fine points of style and the influence of Attic forms on it (1981: 26–27, 45–46), I see no evidence for this distinction in relation to *patrios/patrōos*, even in the readings where the witnesses are unanimous. *Progonikos* appears twice in 2 Maccabees (8:17; 14:17).

19. *Patrōos* appears once in the Greek of Proverbs, where it translates *av*, “father” (27:10), and in a corrupt passage in 2 Esdras (the translation of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah) (7:5). *Patrios* appears only in a corrupt passage in Isaiah (8:21). *Progonikos* does not appear in the Greek Bible outside 2 Maccabees.

20. *Patrios* occurs once in the introduction to Ecclesiasticus, which was written in Greek by the translator of ben Sira’s Hebrew, and twice in 3 Maccabees, which is not related to 2 Maccabees. *Patrōos* appears once in 3 Maccabees. The two adjectives together appear a total of fourteen times in 4 Maccabees, with some interchange and some problematic instances.

hard to imagine the prophets coining terms like *Assyrianism* or *Babylonianism*. For Isaiah of Jerusalem there was no Assyrian culture apart from Assyrian might and Assyrian gods. Opposing empires existed only as sources of domination and idolatry, even when they were ultimately doing God's work. For 2 Maccabees, gentiles are not the enemy (e.g., Doran 1981: 110–11). It assumes, for example, that most gentiles were horrified by the murder of Onias III (4:35). Rather, the Greek way of life is the enemy because it is the agent of a dangerous transformation of values that can occur without actual idolatry, as the description of the priests who prefer exercise to sacrifice recognizes.

Yet even as it campaigns on behalf of Judaism and the ancestral laws, 2 Maccabees exemplifies the transformation of values under the influence of Hellenism. The evidence I concentrate on, the depiction of 2 Maccabees' heroes, has received little attention. But before turning to the heroes, I would like to touch briefly on two other aspects of 2 Maccabees' debt to Hellenism that have received more consideration—its style and its treatment of Jerusalem as polis and the Jewish way of life as a *politeia*.

2 Maccabees' receptiveness to the conventions of contemporary Greek historical writing and its often highly rhetorical style is clear and noteworthy in light of its view of Hellenism as an insidious threat to the Jewish way of life. One might have expected that an author holding such views would attempt a specifically Jewish style for his work, perhaps an imitation of the style of the Greek version of the biblical books that provided the models for 1 Maccabees, Samuel, and Kings.²¹ There is good reason to question the existence of an actual genre of the "tragic" or "pathetic" history 2 Maccabees has often been viewed as representing (e.g., Habicht 1976b: 189–90). (It is perhaps worth noting that except for 2 Maccabees, all other supposed examples of the genre survive only in fragments.) But the features the genre is said to contain are common in Hellenistic history writing and important in 2 Maccabees.²² The melodramatic style, evident in the accounts of the torture and deaths of the martyrs or the death of Antiochus, the concern to show the decline and fall of the wicked as recompense for their overweening ambition and their persecution of the righteous, and the narrator's comments on the events he describes, are all characteristic of contemporary Hellenistic history writing, although, as

21. Goldstein (1976: 14) believes that the translator of 1 Maccabees into Greek purposely chose a style that imitated the Greek Bible although he was capable of more literary Greek.

22. The question whether "pathetic history" constitutes a genre is much discussed (see Doran 1981: 84–89, for a brief summary of this discussion). Following Walbank, Doran (86–87, nn. 43–46) denies the existence of a genre (97); rather he sees 2 Maccabees as sharing *topoi* with other histories that describe events in a dramatic fashion (90–97).

Doran rightly points out, there are also biblical antecedents for the theme of the punishment of the wicked for their arrogance and the role of the persecution of the righteous in bringing about their downfall (84–97).

The divine manifestations, *epiphaneiai*, that come to the aid of the Jews at a number of important moments in 2 Maccabees provide a striking example of the recasting of biblical themes in the style of Hellenistic history writing.²³ Such *epiphaneiai* are also an important feature in other Hellenistic local histories; the best preserved is the Greek inscription from the isle of Rhodes, known as the Lindos Chronicle (Doran 1981: 103–4). The manifestations of 2 Maccabees take the form of splendid heavenly warriors, often with beautifully caparisoned horses. The idea of divine warriors appearing to help Israel has well-established precedents in biblical literature, but the descriptions of the heavenly figures of 2 Maccabees with their shining armor and elegantly equipped horses owe more to Greek literature than to the Bible (*ibid.*: 98–103).

The next example of Hellenism in 2 Maccabees reflects a transformation that goes beyond the inevitable effect of form on content. For 2 Maccabees, Jerusalem is a polis, the Jews are its citizens, and their way of life is a *politeia*. Renaud has argued that the dominance in 2 Maccabees of the plural *nomoi* as opposed to the singular *nomos*, which is virtually without precedent in the Greek Bible, reflects this political understanding of the Jewish way of life: *Nomoi* is the proper Greek terminology for the codified laws of a community (1961: 55–64).²⁴ *Nomos*, Renaud argues, would indicate the Torah, and while the Torah might be viewed as the “soul” of the “body” of the laws, the use of the term *nomoi* points to a communal, political understanding (64–65). The adjectives for *ancestral* that sometimes modify the laws (63–64) and the term *patris*, literally “native land,” used in 2 Maccabees “according to the Greek conception of the nation conceived as a moral entity” (60) all point in the same direction, as does the use of terms associated with the polis such as *politēs* and *politeusthai* (62–63).

Renaud overstates the difference between *nomos* and *nomoi* and the degree of conscious choice on the part of the author of 2 Maccabees (Renaud 1961: 65, in relation to 2 Maccabees 13: 10–11 [*nomos*] and 13:14 [*nomoi*]). Surely the description of the laws—plural—as divine, noted by Renaud himself (64), argues against as sharp a distinction as he wishes to make.

23. More or less elaborate *epiphaneiai* are described at the repulse of Heliodorus, 3:24–34; before Antiochus’ invasion of Jerusalem, 5:2–4; protecting Judah in the battle against Timothy, 10:29–30; at the defeat of Lysias at Beth Zur, 11:8–10. See also the references in the programmatic statement, 2:21; in prayer as a quality of God, 14:15; and in the final battle of the work, 15:27.

24. I would like to thank Daniel Schwartz for calling this article to my attention.

The exaggeration of the distance between *nomos* and *nomoi* reflects an explicit Christian preference for the outlook of the author of 2 Maccabees, whom Renaud calls a “humanist” (66–67), against 1 Maccabees’ piety of works, in which, according to Renaud, the Law is more important than God himself (51–52). Still, Renaud’s claim that 2 Maccabees has come to understand the Jewish people and their way of life through categories drawn from the life of the polis is a powerful one.

I turn now to 2 Maccabees’ descriptions of its heroes, Judah himself, Onias III, and the martyrs, who play a crucial role in 2 Maccabees. Only after the two gruesome accounts of the deaths at the hands of the Seleucid enemies (6:18–7:42) of pious Jews who refuse to betray their ancestral traditions does Judah take up arms and win his first victory. First the aged Eleazar refuses to save himself by even pretending to consume the flesh of the idolatrous sacrifice (6:18–31). Next the mother and her seven sons resist the blandishments of Antiochus himself, preferring a pious death to life with wealth and power (chap. 7). The connection between Judah’s victory and the deaths of the martyrs is clear. The last of the seven brothers to die in chapter 7 prays that the deaths of the brothers may bring an end to God’s anger against his people (7:37–38); before their battle, Judah and his men beseech God to have mercy on his suffering people, to look at the destruction wrought in Jerusalem, and “to hearken to the blood that cried out to him” (8:2–4; quotation from 8:3). It is surely no accident that Judah’s victory over Nicanor, the final episode of the work, is preceded by the suicide of the pious Razis (14:37–46), which appears as a form of martyrdom.

Before I proceed, let me address briefly the question of the relationship of chapter 7 to the rest of 2 Maccabees. Scholars have long noted that chapter 7 stands apart from the rest of the work in certain significant ways (e.g., Niese 1900: 37–38). Habicht offers the fullest statement of the case. He claims that chapter 7 is an addition to the work, from the hand neither of Jason nor of the epitomator, but of a later reviser. The most important evidence for this view includes the style of the Greek, which Habicht views as reflecting a Hebrew original, and the centrality of resurrection, which sets this chapter apart from the martyrdom of Eleazar in chapter 6 and from 2 Maccabees as a whole (Habicht 1976b: 171–77, 233).²⁵

25. In *Rome and Martyrdom*, G. W. Bowersock moves far beyond previous scholarship in suggesting that not only chapter 7 but also the martyrdom of Eleazar is a later addition to 2 Maccabees. He suggests a date in the middle of the first century C.E. for the martyrdoms. Thus, they are roughly contemporary, in his view, with the period during which the gospels were being composed: They are not sources for the gospels, but rather reflect the same conditions that gave rise to the Christian concept of martyrdom, although Bowersock makes much of the fact that the term *martyr* is entirely absent from 2 Maccabees (1995: 10–13). While Bowersock can claim considerable support for his view of chapter 7 as a later addition

I think Habicht is correct in these two observations. The prose style of the martyrdom of chapter 7 is less elaborate than that of the martyrdom of chapter 6. Further, a considerable number of later Hebrew versions of the story of the mother and her seven sons exist, some of which do not appear to be dependent on 2 Maccabees 7 (Doran 1980: 189–221).²⁶ Thus, the suggestion that the influence of a Hebrew original, with a more paratactic style, is what sets the style of chapter 7 apart is quite plausible. I also accept Habicht's point about the central role of resurrection in chapter 7 in contrast to its absence in chapter 6.

Nonetheless I agree with those who argue that chapter 7 plays a central role in 2 Maccabees and has been fully integrated into it. Ulrich Kellerman, who emphasizes considerations having to do with the structure and content of 2 Maccabees, sees chapter 7 as stemming from a source incorporated by Jason himself (1979: 54–60). Jan Willem van Henten uses vocabulary to support his view that chapter 7 must be considered in the context of 2 Maccabees as a whole, noting the continuities in this regard between chapter 7 and the account of Antiochus' death in chapter 9 (Henten 1989: 132–33, especially n. 12).²⁷ My discussion below also points to continuities in vocabulary between chapter 7 and the rest of 2 Maccabees. Thus, while it may be impossible to decide whether chapter 7 was part of Jason's work or was incorporated by the epitomator, it is an integral part of the work that has come down to us.

In what follows I try to show that 2 Maccabees understands its heroes, the champions of Judaism, in terms drawn from Greek culture. My approach is rather different from that of Louis Feldman, who has written extensively on Josephus' use of Greek categories in his accounts of biblical heroes (see 1988: 485–94, for a programmatic statement; for more than twenty relevant articles see the bibliography in 1993: 594–96). Feldman argues that Josephus' retelling of the stories of a range of biblical heroes reflects the canons of Greek rhetoric and philosophy. Thus Josephus attributes to his heroes noble ancestry and beauty as well as the four cardinal virtues of wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice, with the addition of a fifth virtue also known to the Greeks, piety (1988: 486–94). Feldman

to 2 Maccabees, its differences from the martyrdom of Eleazar are an important part of the argument for this position, and these differences serve to undermine Bowersock's treatment of the two passages as a unit.

26. For Doran's position on the relationship of the texts he considers, see page 200. For a more extensive sampling of later literature, see Cohen 1991 [1953]: 39–60.

27. In his 1989 article, Henten refers to the more extensive treatment of the subject in his book *De joodse martelaren als grondleggers van een nieuwe orde* (Leiden, 1986).

understands Josephus' intended audience for the *Antiquities* as both non-Jews and Jews (470–71) and sees his purpose as apologetic: The Jews, too, have produced great men worthy of universal admiration (480–86).

I understand 2 Maccabees' adoption of Greek categories for its heroes as less conscious, and more complicated, than Josephus' reshaping of biblical narratives to Greek norms. Since most of 2 Maccabees' characterization of its heroes occurs through explicit evaluation rather than the more indirect medium of narrating actions, much of my discussion concerns 2 Maccabees' terminology of praise. What is striking about this vocabulary is that its background is clearly not biblical but Greek.

The favorite words of praise in the accounts of the martyrs and indeed in 2 Maccabees generally are forms of the adjective *gennaios* (noble); the adverb *gennaiōs* is the most common.²⁸ In the face of torture and death, Eleazar proclaims his intention to remain true to the laws. “By manfully [*andreiōs*] giving up my life now, I will show myself worthy of my old age and leave to the young a noble [*gennaion*] example of how to die a good death willingly and nobly [*gennaiōs*] for the revered and holy laws” (6:27–28). Upon his death, Eleazar is said to leave an “example of nobility [*gennaiotētos*]” for the whole people (6:31). In the next chapter, the brothers and mother encourage each other to die nobly (*gennaiōs*) (7:5); one of the brothers speaks nobly (*gennaiōs*) (7:11); and the mother, in another instance of the association of nobility with manliness, is “filled with a noble [*gennaiōi*] spirit” as she “fire[s] her woman’s reasoning with a man’s courage” (7:21). The behavior of the martyr Razis is described with terms based on the related adjective *eugenēs*, literally, well-born.²⁹ Surrounded by Nicanor’s men, Razis falls on his own sword: He “prefer[red] to die nobly [*eugenōs*] rather than to fall into the hands of sinners and suffer outrages unworthy of his noble birth [*eugeneias*]” (14:42). But in the tumult, Razis misses the point of his sword. Then, we are told, he “nobly³⁰ [*gennaiōs*] ran up on the wall, and manfully [*androdōs*] threw himself down into the crowd” (14:43).

But noble behavior in 2 Maccabees is not restricted to the martyrs. Judah himself is the beneficiary of the only adjectival use applied to a person (12:42). Twice Judah exhorts his men “to fight nobly [*gennaiōs*]” (8:16; 13:14). The adverb is also used in the description of the men’s reaction to

28. The adjective appears three times (6:28, 7:21, 12:42); the adverbial form, eight times (6:28; 7:5, 11; 8:16; 13:14; 14:31, 43; 15:17). The related abstract noun appears once (6:31).

29. The root appears four times, twice in two verses: the adjective and another problematic form in 10:13, the adverb and abstract noun in 14:42.

30. My translation; RSV: “bravely.”

such an exhortation before the final battle against Nicanor: The men resolve “to attack nobly³¹ [*gennaiōs*]” (15:17). These uses are quite consistent with the ones in the martyrological contexts. The last adverbial use is more unusual. When Judah understands that Nicanor’s attitude toward him has changed, he goes into hiding with some chosen men (14:30), and Nicanor realizes that he has been “cleverly outwitted by the man [*gennaiōs hupo tou andros strategētai*]” (14:31), in the RSV translation. The verb *stratego* in this context means something like “out-generaled” (see Lidell, Scott, and Jones 1968, s.v.), and I think that it is a mistake not to translate *gennaiōs* literally. I suspect that 2 Maccabees is attempting to head off a response not unlikely among its readers, that Judah’s flight was shameful, and that the manly thing would have been to meet the enemy head-on, as Judah will do after the intensification of Nicanor’s persecution and the martyrdom of Razis. In other words, *gennaios* and derivatives in 2 Maccabees almost always describe courage in the face of force, whether of torturers or an opposing army.

We have seen that the adjectives for *ancestral* are barely represented in the books of the Greek Bible translated from Hebrew. *Gennaios* and its derivatives appear not at all in these books, while *eugenēs* and derivatives appear twice.³² It is clear, then, that 2 Maccabees does not use these terms to recall the Bible. It is more difficult to characterize the sphere of Greek literature from which *gennaios* and *eugenēs* are drawn because they appear in a wide range of texts (Dover 1974: 93–95).³³ Forms of *gennaios* are frequent in Plato, but the most characteristic form there is the vocative, a usage that is prominent also in writers influenced by Plato such as Philo and Plutarch.³⁴ This usage is absent in 2 Maccabees.

In 2 Maccabees the most common form of the root is the adverb *gennaiōs*. An author who shares with 2 Maccabees a marked preference for the adverbial form is Polybius.³⁵ Again and again Polybius uses *gennaiōs* in re-

31. My translation; RSV: “bravely.”

32. The two instances of translation from Hebrew are Eccl. 7:7 and Job 1:3. Of the remaining eighteen instances (some are not unanimous readings) of forms of *eugenēs* and related terms in the Greek Bible, all but one come from 2 and 4 Maccabees.

33. I would like to thank Froma Zeitlin for the reference to Dover.

34. My figures are based on word searches done on the Ibycus computer program. I would like to thank John Keaney for his help in using it.

Plato contains roughly 100 uses of *gennaios* and related forms. Plutarch contains perhaps 120, while Philo contains about forty. The great size of these corpora means that these terms are relatively far less frequent in these authors than in 2 Maccabees.

35. Of sixty-nine instances of the root in Polybius, forty-six by my count are the adverb. Although Josephus uses the root roughly ninety times, I see little kinship to the use in 2 Maccabees.

lation to military matters and death, contexts in which the connection to “manful” behavior is clear. Let me offer a single example: “On this occasion as on others they [the Romans] gallantly [*gennaiōs*] faced opponents who largely outnumbered them” (*The Histories* 1.17.12). Polybius was a contemporary of Jason of Cyrene and thus only a generation or two older than the epitomator. One important set of associations of *gennaios* at the time 2 Maccabees was composed, then, was courage of a masculine kind. 2 Maccabees insists that the behavior of the martyrs as well as of Judah and his men deserves this praise.³⁶

Another striking instance of 2 Maccabees’ appropriation of Greek values comes in the description of Onias III as he appears to Judah in a vision before the battle with Nicanor: “a gentleman³⁷ [*kalon kai agathon*], of modest bearing and gentle manner, one who spoke fittingly and had been trained from childhood in all that belongs to excellence” (15:12). From the fifth century on, the phrase *kalos kai agathos*, literally, “beautiful and good,” embodied what Greeks considered admirable (Dover 1974: 41–45; Donlan 1980: 129).³⁸ The term can mean a gentleman in merely the social sense but it also possesses a moral sense: “perfect character” (Liddell, Scott, and Jones 1968, s.v. *kalokagathos*). The term is quintessentially Greek; there is no comparable biblical expression.³⁹

Even the very brief description of Onias gives some indication of the content of *kalokagathia* according to 2 Maccabees. First there are Onias’ personal qualities: He is “of modest bearing and gentle manner.” Then there is his upbringing and education: He has been “trained from childhood” in excellence, and he is “one who spoke fittingly” (15:12). Onias’ eloquence comes as a bit of a surprise since 2 Maccabees has never be-

36. Henten emphasizes the connection between the martyrs and Judah’s soldiers, pointing to passages in which Judah urges his men to fight to the death for the very things for which the martyrs die (1989: 145–46). He finds the origins of the ideal of martyrdom in the Roman soldier’s *devotio*, his willing death for his country; a similar ideal is found among the greatest warriors of the Greeks, the Spartans, who also figure as friends (and relatives) of the Jews in 2 Maccabees (146–49).

37. My translation; RSV: “a noble and good man.”

38. I would like to thank Froma Zeitlin for the reference to Donlan.

39. In addition to 2 Maccabees, the phrase appears in the Greek Bible in 4 Maccabees and, more surprising, in the Book of Tobit. In 4 Maccabees the phrase occurs only once (4:1), but the noun *kalokagathia*, which is also common in Greek literature, appears several times (1:8 [ms. S], 10; 3:18; 11:22; 13:25; 15:9). The occurrences in Tobit (5:13, where it describes lineage, not a person; 7:7 [mss. BA]; and 9:6 [ms. S]) are unexpected since the Greek Tobit is a translation from Aramaic. But since the Aramaic has been lost, the original of *kalos kai agathos* cannot be determined. Outside the Greek Bible, the author of the *Letter of Aristeas* also used these terms to describe Jews, the high priest Eleazar (3) and the translators of the Torah into Greek (46) (Goldstein 1983: 499).

fore had occasion to mention it. But speaking well is something a Greek gentleman, and only a gentleman, would have learned (Donlan 1980: 158–59). It is not surprising that 2 Maccabees is silent about the other side of the Greek gentleman's education, which began earlier and was perhaps more than anything else formative for the ideal of *kalokagathia* as popularly understood, the physical training of the gymnasium (156–58).

The ideal of the *kalokagathon* informs not only the description of Onias III, where the adjectives are actually used, but also the descriptions of Onias' coapparition, the prophet Jeremiah, of the martyr Eleazar (as noted by Abel 1949: 474; Habicht 1976b: 277), and even to some degree of the mother of the seven sons. The descriptions of Jeremiah and Eleazar echo some aspects of the description of Onias and add one aspect of *kalokagathia* that is missing from Onias' description. Jeremiah appears "distinguished by his gray hair and dignity, and of marvelous majesty and authority" (15:13). Eleazar is described as "advanced in age and most beautiful in appearance"⁴⁰ (6:18). His "reasoning"⁴¹ is "worthy of his years and the dignity of his old age and the gray hairs which he had reached with distinction and his excellent life even from childhood" (6:23). The beauty of the body trained in the activities of the gymnasium that Greeks admired was an aspect of gentlemanliness that 2 Maccabees preferred to forget. But 2 Maccabees can safely praise the appearance of Eleazar and Jeremiah, where age eliminates fitness as the physical ideal, and can thus claim that its Jewish gentlemen were by no means inferior to the Greeks in regard to beauty either.

Like Onias, Eleazar has been properly brought up from childhood on. While Eleazar is never described as speaking well, his brief but eloquent speeches with their careful structure testify to his ability. Eleazar's "refined reasoning"⁴² (*logismon asteion*) (6:23) is another aspect of his gentleman's skills. For 1 Maccabees the reasoning of the martyrs was philosophy, in the technical sense, but in 2 Maccabees' description of Eleazar it is the wisdom of the gentleman who plays a part in public affairs.

Speech also plays a central role in the account of the martyrdom of the mother and her seven sons. Each son addresses his torturers as he dies, but only briefly; the last son's speech and the mother's two speeches are somewhat longer, and they are no less rhetorical and carefully wrought than those of Eleazar. It is notable that the mother strengthens her "woman's

40. My translation; RSV: "of noble presence."

41. My translation; RSV: "decision."

42. My translation; RSV: "worthy decision." Especially because of the parallel language in the story of the mother and her seven sons, I would here insist on a more literal translation of *logismon*.

reasoning [*logismon*] with a man's courage" (7:21) before her first speech. The attention to the fact of reasoning reminds us of Eleazar; the reference to "a man's courage" recalls the association of noble behavior with manliness.

This martyrdom story also provides the occasion for a final twist to 2 Maccabees' admiration for Greek eloquence. Three times in the course of the account 2 Maccabees notes that the sons speak in their ancestral language (7:8, 21, 27). This for 2 Maccabees is surely Hebrew. Seth Schwartz has recently argued that it was in the later part of the Second Temple period that Hebrew began to enjoy a kind of symbolic significance because of its association with the Torah and the temple. He finds the first clear evidence for this use of Hebrew to assert Jewish identity in the period just after the revolt, in the choice of archaizing Hebrew for the composition of 1 Maccabees, in 2 Maccabees' report about the use of the ancestral language, and in the coinage of John Hyrcanus I (1995: 21–28; for the standard understanding of the linguistic situation in Palestine in the Second Temple period, Schürer 1979: 20–28).

In 2 Maccabees 7, Hebrew functions to assert defiance and resistance (cf. Schwartz 1995: 27, on the Hebrew language and paleo-Hebrew script of the silver coins of the revolt against Rome and the Bar Kokhba revolt). According to 2 Maccabees, Antiochus himself is present at the martyrdom of the mother and her seven sons. The presence of the king serves to intensify the tension of the fictive linguistic setting: The Jewish martyrs are confronting not just Greek-speaking bureaucrats and soldiers, but the Greek-speaking tyrant himself. We are never told that the brothers require a translator to understand the questions and the taunts of their executioners, but when the second brother refuses his torturers' invitation to eat of the sacrifices with the simple word, "No," the text insists that he speaks in his ancestral language, *patriōi phonēi* (7:8). To claim that this single word was uttered in Hebrew is to underscore the brother's defiance. Surely any subject of the Hellenistic empires could have made this answer at least in Greek.

The mother's speeches and the reaction of Antiochus to them emphasize the defiance implicit in the use of Hebrew. Because the mother delivers the speech 2 Maccabees characterizes as nobly masculine in the ancestral language (7:21), "Antiochus felt that he was being treated with contempt, and he was suspicious of her reproachful tone" (7:24). The word here translated "tone," *phonē*, is the same word elsewhere translated "language." Antiochus' response to the mother's words surely reflects the fact that he does not know what she is saying because he cannot understand her. To the youngest and last surviving son Antiochus offers wealth and honor if only he will obey his commands (7:24). When the son fails to respond, the

king attempts to enlist the mother's aid in persuading him (7:25). Finally the mother consents to try (7:26), but again she speaks in her ancestral language, urging the son to die rather than accept the tyrant's offer (7:27–29). The use of Hebrew allows the mother to urge her son to behave in exactly the reverse of the manner the king wishes.

The other mentions of use of the ancestral language, by Judah and his men, indicate not so much defiance as allegiance to the cause of Judaism. Before his defeat of Gorgias Judah gives the battle cry in the ancestral language (*patriōi phonēi*) (12:37), and at the conclusion of the book, after their triumph over Nicanor, Judah's men praise God in the ancestral language (*patriōi phonēi*) (15:29).

For 2 Maccabees, then, noble speech, a quality clearly associated with the Greek gentleman rather than the biblical hero, is an important aspect of the greatness of the martyrs. Can the claim that the martyrs and other heroes used Hebrew at certain crucial moments be taken as a sign of uneasiness about the embrace of the Greek value of eloquence? Rather, it seems to me that the depiction of the mother's eloquent speeches as delivered in Hebrew serves to integrate further an aspect of Greek gentlemanliness into *Ioudaismos*.

To some degree, 2 Maccabees' embrace of Greek categories may represent a polemic. Just as 2 Maccabees at one point refers to the forces of Antiochus as "barbarian hordes" (2:21), it also suggests that its heroes are more truly gentlemen than the Greeks who frequent their gymnasia. But the prominence of Greek categories in the depiction of the heroes surely reflects something deeper than polemic. The Greek *gennaios*, which does not correspond to any biblical term, plays such a dominant role that one can only conclude that nobility has become 2 Maccabees' own criterion for judging human behavior. So too for the ideal of the *kalokagathos*.

2 Maccabees, then, condemns the gymnasium for introducing new values while praising its own heroes in terms that reflect those values. Yet, as we have seen, 2 Maccabees was not a passive recipient of Greek influence; the process of adapting those aspects of *Hellenismos* that it wished to incorporate into *Ioudaismos* involved considerable transformation. The dialectic of adaptation can be seen clearly in an understanding of gentlemanliness that excludes physical culture in favor of verbal skill or in the description of the behavior of the martyred mother in terms more often used for the physical courage of men at war. Thus, despite its claim of opposition between Judaism and Hellenism, 2 Maccabees embodies a far more complex relationship between the two cultures in which defining features of Hellenism undergo a transformation that makes them central aspects of Judaism.

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