

## The Perfection of ‘Love for Offspring’: Greek Representations of Maternal Affection and the Achievement of the Heroine of 4 Maccabees

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A close comparison with Plutarch’s *De amore proliis* and Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* shows the author of 4 Maccabees to have used common topics from Greek ethical reflection on love for offspring as a means of commending Torah-observance as the means by which one is enabled to secure one’s children’s eternal well-being, fulfilling the natural goal of love for offspring more completely. The author shows how trust in God’s future enables the mother to view even the death of her children as the fulfillment rather than the negation of her maternal investment, as in the laments of Euripides’s heroines in *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*, from which the author explicitly distances her, enabling her exemplary courage.

The author of 4 Maccabees, as is well known, drank deeply from the Greco-Roman environment that surrounded him. Dismissals of him as a philosophical dilettante have been overturned by careful examinations both of the complexity of Middle Stoicism and the complexity of the author’s interaction with that common topic of philosophical ethics, the ‘mastery of the passions’.<sup>1</sup> Hans-Josef Klauck meticulously examined the treatment of ‘fraternal/sororal affection’ in Plutarch and 4 Maccabees, showing both their close affinities and 4 Maccabees’s distinctive development of that constellation of topics.<sup>2</sup> Jan Willem van Henten carefully explored the connections between 4 Maccabees and Greco-Roman traditions about the life given in exchange for others.<sup>3</sup> This study seeks to continue

1 R. Renehan, ‘The Greek Philosophic Background of Fourth Maccabees’, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 115 (1972) 223–38; D. A. deSilva, *4 Maccabees* (Guides to the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998) 51–75. The accusation of philosophical dilettantism was made by Emil Schürer. See E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135): A New English Version. Volume 3, Division 1* (ed. G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. Goodman; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1986) 590.

2 H.-J. Klauck, ‘Brotherly Love in Plutarch and in 4 Maccabees’, in *Greeks, Romans, Christians* (ed. D. L. Balch, E. Ferguson, and W. A. Meeks; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990) 144–56.

3 J. W. van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviors of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 & 4 Maccabees* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

investigation of 4 Maccabees's formative interaction with the philosophical and literary texts and topics native to his Greek environment, and to analyze his strategic use of these topics to advance his overarching goal (promoting continued observance of the Jewish way of life as the path to attain the highest Greek ideals),<sup>4</sup> by giving similar attention to the characterization of the mother and her relationship with her seven sons.

The present study focuses on comparative texts that bear a strong resemblance to these passages in 4 Maccabees in genre, purpose, and content (topics and/or vocabulary). The *digressio* in 4 Macc 14.13–19 (supplemented by material in 15.4–10) presents a miniature discourse concerning affection for offspring, resembling Plutarch's larger-scaled treatment of the same topic in *De amore prolis* and, secondarily, Aristotle's briefer comments about parental affection scattered throughout the treatment of kinds of friendship in book eight of his *Nicomachian Ethics*. All three texts present philosophical reflection on the sources and natural manifestations of this particular emotion. Fourth Maccabees 16.6–11 introduces a dramatic lament, a 'set piece' *not* uttered by the bereaved mother, similar again in form, purpose, and content to the laments placed on the lips of bereaved women in Euripidean tragedy.<sup>5</sup>

After a brief introduction locating the author's treatment of the mother within the overall framework of his philosophical argument, this paper examines points of contact between the treatment of parental affection (4 Macc 14.13–19; 15.4–10), the passion that the mother particularly must master, and the comparative material in Plutarch and Aristotle, followed by an analysis of how the author has employed these topics as he advanced his philosophical argument promoting Torah-nurtured piety as the infallible path to mastery of the passions. The study then turns to the author's invention of a fictive lament, such as might have been

4 This is a broad point of consensus (see deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 43–6).

5 These comparative texts do not, by any means, exhaust the list of Greco-Roman treatments of virtuous mothers, the ethical demands of parenting and of placing a higher premium on virtuous action than on reacting to the pain or suffering of a child, and the like. The larger genre of 4 Macc 14.11–17.6 is a laudatory encomium on the moral achievement of the mother, whose 'manliness' surpassed that of males (4 Macc 15.30), with which it has been profitable to compare Plutarch's 'On the Bravery of Women', a collection of stories narrating the surprising achievements of women (including the mother, Megisto), frequently in regard to their superior embodiment of 'male' virtues (see deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 83–84). Seneca's *Consolationes*, particularly his *Ad Marciam*, would be appropriately compared with 4 Maccabees again on the basis of likeness of form (addressing a bereaved mother; see the apostrophe in 4 Macc 17.4), purpose (authors attempting to help a mother come to terms with the experience of bereavement) and content (the use of similar topics, such as the blessed state of the deceased or the possibility of displaying bravery in the face of hardship). Because these comparative texts are not written with the development of the topic of parental affection or the dramatic expression of maternal bereavement in mind, they will not be prominently featured in this study except as they 'stray' into the focal points of this study.

uttered by a mother after such bereavement (16.6–11), drawn from vocabulary and topics familiar from Euripides's *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba* and to an analysis of why, according to the author, the mother of the seven refuses to give voice to such a natural lament, and thus how parental love indeed reaches its consummation in her urging her children on to martyrdom.

### 1. The Role of the Mother's Achievement within the Philosophical Argument

Fourth Maccabees presents itself as a philosophical demonstration (ἐπιδείκνυσθαι, 1.1; τὴν ἀπόδειξιν, 3.19; ἀπέδειξα, 16.4) that places particularly heavy emphasis on proof by example (1.7–9). This emphasis on virtuous exemplars leads quite naturally to the amplification of encomiastic elements throughout the text, which the exordium alerts hearers to expect (ἔπαινον, 1.2; ἐπαινεῖν, 1.10). Attempts, therefore, to divorce the two parts of 4 Maccabees (i.e. 1.1–3.18 and 3.19–18.24) as originally separate units ('philosophical discourse' and 'encomium') or to view them as functioning essentially independently ignore the author's own claims concerning how the discursive and narrative sections work together in concert (1.12).<sup>6</sup>

The examples of the martyrs, then, contribute both proofs of the philosophical demonstration and praiseworthy models for behavior that support, in turn, the hearers' commitment to embody the way of life embedded in the philosophical proposition that 'pious reason' – the decision-making faculty that has been trained by the Jewish Law (1.15–18) – 'masters the passions' (1.1).<sup>7</sup> The author proceeds to advance the more exclusive claim that *only* this kind of training results in a decision-making faculty that is fully equipped to master any passion, consistently choosing virtue and nobility (one hears the steady crescendo through 2.23; 7.18–19; 9.17–18). We want to attend, therefore, both to how the author's heroine

6 These positions were advanced, respectively, in J. C. H. Lebram, 'Die literarische Form des vierten Makkabäerbuches', *VC* 28 (1974) 81–96 (82–83); and Urs Breitenstein, *Beobachtungen zu Sprache, Stil und Gedankengut des Vierten Makkabäerbuchs* (Basel/Stuttgart: Schwabe, 1978) 132–3; see also A. Dupont-Sommer, *Le Quatrième Livre des Machabées* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honore Champion, 1939) 19. Among the unpersuaded are P. D. Redditt, 'The Concept of *Nomos* in Fourth Maccabees', *CBQ* 45 (1983) 249–70 (262–63); H.-J. Klauck, *4 Makkabäerbuch* (Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit 3.6; Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1989) 648; van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs*, 69; deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 25–8, 46–9; S. K. Stowers, '4 Maccabees', in *The HarperCollins Bible Commentary* (ed. J. L. Mays; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2000) 844–55 (844–5).

7 A similar combination appears in Seneca's *De constantia sapientis*, which introduces familiar examples of philosophy 'at work' delivering what it promises in the persons of Cato the Younger and Stilbo of Megara, praising the achievements of these 'complete persons' so as to render the Stoic philosophy both credible and desirable.

matches the highest achievements and ideals expressed by Greek authors, and to how she surpasses the achievements of their models.<sup>8</sup>

The mother's example (14.11–17.6) is, both implicitly by placement (as the final proof) and explicitly by way of introduction (14.11–12), the ultimate example of the author's thesis. Jason of Cyrene (or his epitomator) also gave special attention to the mother's moral achievement in the face of such horror (2 Macc 7.20–23). Fourth Maccabees expands the source's attention both to her firmness in faith and her role in spurring her sons on to virtue in the face of pain and death.<sup>9</sup> The ability of this mother, being bereft of seven sons, to remain steadfast in her commitment to God and to the pious course of action represents, for the author, the perfection of ἀνδρεία – 'courage' as 'manliness' (see 15.30).

Before we enthusiastically congratulate the author for giving the woman her due, we should consider that he makes the mother his climactic example precisely because it is so *unexpected* that she would perform so well under such pressures. The deeply rooted prejudice that women were more prone to be led by their passions, and less naturally well-equipped for mastery of the passions (see Aristotle *Pol.* 1.13 1260a12–14; Philo *Leg. All.* 2.44–50; Seneca *Marc.* 7.2), served to legitimate their subordinate status within the household. The author of 4 Maccabees exploits this prejudice with an adverbial καί: the audience should not be astounded that reason exercised control over 'these males' (τῶν ἀνδρῶν), since 'even a woman's mind (καὶ γυναικὸς νοῦς) was able to master more diverse agonies' (14.11). The highest achievement of the Torah is nurturing such discipline that 'even a woman's mind', shored up by the defenses of piety, can master the passions.

## 2. 'On Affection for Offspring' in 4 Maccabees, Plutarch, and Aristotle

The passion that most occupies this woman *qua* mother is 'love for offspring' (introduced as early as 2.12), a generally positive emotion that must

8 In so doing, this study also seeks to advance the important conversation about the characterization of this mother *qua mulier* in 4 Maccabees, such as been helpfully begun in Robin Darling Young, 'The "Woman with the Soul of Abraham": Traditions about the Mother of the Maccabean Martyrs', in *Women like This: New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. A.-J. Levine; SBLEJL 1; Atlanta: Scholars, 1991) 67–81; S. D. Moore and J. C. Anderson, 'Taking it Like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees', *JBL* 117 (1998) 249–73.

9 Both authors thus depart from the Thucydidean tradition of avoiding public speech about women: 'great is her glory of whom there is least talk among men whether in praise or in blame' (*Hist.* II.45.2). They align rather with 'the Roman custom' which, according to Plutarch (who also followed it himself), 'publicly renders to women, as to men, a fitting commemoration after the end of their life' (*Mul. Virt.* Introduction [*Mor.* 242F]). The author of 4 Maccabees would concur with Plutarch in his view that studying virtue-in-action in both male and female subjects leads to a clearer perception of virtue itself (*Mor.* 243C), and with Seneca's estimation that women are as capable of displaying virtue, and, in particular, enduring suffering and toil, as males (see *Marc.* 16.1–2).

nevertheless never be allowed to get the upper hand when its drives conflict with the requirements of virtuous behavior. The author identifies this as, in fact, the most powerful of emotions, internalizing the sufferings and the passions that wrack each of the mother's offspring, feeling them as deeply within as the children experience them in their own bodies (14.11b–13; 15.11, 16, 22; 16.3). His use of common topics related to affection for offspring, such as can be observed in the writings of Plutarch and Aristotle, amplify the force of natural affection upon this particular mother, and thus amplify her achievement of self-mastery.

In *De amore prolis* (*Moralia* 493A–497E), Plutarch considers Epicurus's rebuke of human parents whose care for their children is an investment made with a view to the children returning the favor, as it were, in their care for their parents in their old age (*Am. prol.* 2 [*Mor.* 495A–B]). He examines the examples to be found in Nature, where the 'special characteristics' of natural and proper behavior are 'preserved pure and unmixed and simple', that is, free from the distortions introduced through human culture (*Am. prol.* 1 [*Mor.* 493C]).<sup>10</sup> Animals display pure motivations for procreation (neither the indulgence in the pleasure of sexual intercourse, nor the desire to qualify to inherit under the Roman *ius trium liberorum*), as well as tremendous 'forethought, endurance, and self-control' in regard to the bearing and care of offspring (*Am. prol.* 2 [*Mor.* 494A]).

Plutarch dismisses the bee as an overused commonplace (*Am. prol.* 2 [*Mor.* 494A]), and so takes the reader to the kingfisher, the shark, the she-bear, the lion, an unspecified bird, a female dog, partridges, and hens. The kingfisher is remarkable for its preparation of a protective nest, and the shark for similarly exotic means of keeping its vulnerable young safe. The proverbial bird (Plutarch recites Homer *Iliad* IX.324) provides a model of self-control and altruism, feeding her young 'at the cost of her own hunger'. The lion, she-dog, partridge, and hen all distinguish themselves in defense of their young, whose well-being they seek to safeguard at all costs without regard for the danger to themselves. Plutarch gives special attention to the partridge and the hen valiantly warding off the encroacher (*Am. prol.* 2 [*Mor.* 494E–F]).

The author of 4 Maccabees draws heavily on this cluster of topics in his initial characterization of parental love:

(14.13) Observe how intricate the affection of parental love is, drawing everything toward a sympathy coming from the inmost parts. (14) Where indeed even the unreasoning animals have sympathy and affection toward those born from them of the same kind as found among human beings, (15) for even among birds the tame ones defend their nestlings by building upon

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle also regards 'the affection of parent for offspring and offspring for parent' to be 'a natural instinct, not only in human beings but also in birds and most animals' (*Eth. nic.* VIII.1.3).

the rooftops,<sup>11</sup> (16) while others, making the peaks of mountains and sheer parts of ravines and the holes and highest parts of trees their nests, bear their young and hinder the one who would approach. (17) But if they are even then unable to hinder [the encroacher], flying around them, pained with affection, calling out with their own voice, they<sup>12</sup> help their children as much as they can. (18) And why is it necessary to demonstrate sympathy towards children through unreasoning animals, (19) when indeed even bees, around the season for making honeycomb, defend themselves against the encroachers and, just as with an iron sting, strike those approaching their brood and defend them even to death? (20) But sympathy for her children did not dislodge the mother of the young men, like-souled with Abraham as she was.

Both Plutarch and the author of 4 Maccabees look to the examples of nature (birds and bees are prominent in both accounts), concluding that Nature has implanted in parents the strong drive to secure the well-being of their offspring through the provision of safe homes and through selfless, even frenzied, attempts to rescue their young when threatened with harm.<sup>13</sup>

The powerful emotion of maternal love (in particular) comes from deep within the person of a mother, involving her entire body in their agonies (14.13). The Greek ethical tradition identified a number of factors involved in this attachment. Aristotle treats parental love as a kind of friendship, finding that ‘parents love their children as themselves (one’s offspring being as it were another self – other because separate)’ (*Eth. nic.* VIII.12.3). Aristotle’s definition of a friend as ‘another self’ is well-known, as is his identification of ‘likeness’ as the basis for friendly feelings (*Eth. nic.* VIII.8.5). Aristotle understands the affection of parents to exceed that of their children because of the longer period of time in which parents ‘love’ the child: ‘parents love their children as soon as they are born, children their parents only when time has elapsed and they have acquired understanding, or at least perception’ (*Eth. nic.* VIII.12.3). Plutarch shares the conviction that parental love begins at the earliest moment of the child’s life (*Am. prol.* 3 [*Mor.* 495C]). But this factor also explains for Aristotle why mothers experience love for offspring more deeply than fathers, for mothers have nine additional months during which to nurture the feeling of emotional connection with the life growing within it (*Eth. nic.* VIII.12.3).<sup>14</sup> The time of the child in the womb is understood to be a time for special bonding between mother and child.

11 My translation follows Dupont-Sommer (*Quatrième Livre*, 138), who accepted Adolf Deissmann’s emendation (‘Das vierte Makkabäerbuch’, in *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments. Band II.* [ed. E. Kautzsch; Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1900] 149–176 [esp. 169]) to ὄροφο-κοιτοῦντα, ‘making a bed/nest of thatched reeds’.

12 The singular verbs are still governed by the neuter plural nouns of vv. 15–16.

13 Seneca will also seek out Nature’s proper, intended limits for grieving in the behavior of birds, arguing that prolonged grief is contrary to Nature (*Marc.* 7.2).

14 Euripides (*Frag.* 1015) also bears witness to this truism: ‘The mother, however, always loves the children more than the father’.

Plutarch draws further attention to the biological arrangements that assume and point to a deeply implanted love for offspring, particularly in mothers. The re-routing of the flow of the mother's blood from monthly evacuation to the nurturing of the foetus, thence to the production of milk after the child's birth, shows Nature's forethought and argues, as from effect to cause, for the affection for offspring that Nature implants in the mother (in particular), without which the apparatus would be useless (*Am. prol.* 3 [*Mor.* 495E–496B]). Plutarch also understands nature to have arranged the mother's body so as to promote intimate interaction that feeds love for offspring. Breast-feeding is a prime example of this, for 'while other animals have their dugs hanging loose beneath the belly, in women they grow above, upon the breast, where mothers can kiss and embrace and fondle the infant, the inference being that the end and aim of bearing a child is not utility, but affection' (*Am. prol.* 3 [*Mor.* 496C]).<sup>15</sup>

Fourth Maccabees resonates deeply with these conversations about the connection of parent (in particular, mother) and child:

(15.4) O, how can I describe the children-loving emotions of parents? We impress a wondrous similarity of both soul and form into the miniature stamp of a child. And mothers especially, because mothers become more sympathetic than fathers from their sufferings for those born from them. (5) For the weaker<sup>16</sup> mothers are, and the more children they bear, the more they love their children. (6) And the mother of the seven children, who was given strong affection by means of seven pregnancies, loved her children more than all mothers, (7) and on account of the many pangs suffered for each of them was compelled to have sympathy for them. (8) But on account of reverence toward God she disregarded the temporary deliverance of the children. (9) Not only so, but on account of the nobility and goodness of the sons and their ready obedience to the law she had even greater affection for them. (10) For they were so just and self-controlled and courageous and magnanimous and loving towards their brothers and towards their mother that they obeyed her, guarding what was lawful even unto death.

In this second passage on 'affection for offspring', the author introduces the topic of 'likeness' as a factor contributing to the 'emotions of parents who love their

<sup>15</sup> Psuedo-Plutarch similarly promotes breast-feeding by the natural mother (as opposed to a wet-nurse) on the grounds that, by so doing, 'mothers would come to be more kindly disposed towards their children, and more inclined to show them affection' (*Lib. ed.* 5 [*Mor.* 3D]).

<sup>16</sup> Rahlfs reads ἀσθενόψυχοι, 'weak-souled', with Alexandrinus, but Sinaiticus reads ἀσθενέστεραν (changed by a corrector to ἀσθενέστεραι). The discussion below is based on the reading in Sinaiticus, which, if original, shows the author presenting a strictly physiological assessment of the mother's constitution. Alexandrinus could be construed as a statement about mothers' psychological or moral capacity, which runs against the tendency of this author to promote child-bearing as a source of fortitude. Dupont-Sommer (*Quatrième Livre*, 140) and Hadas (*Fourth Maccabees*, 221) find the placement of ἀσθενέστεραι difficult, transposing it conceptually to stand outside and prior to the ὅσῳ clause, but this violates the author's clear syntactic signals.



children' (15.4).<sup>17</sup> The attention given to the moral character of these children (15.9–10) may support viewing moral likeness as a bond between mother and children, since the author attributes their noble character as endearing them further to their mother and their steadfastness to the point of death as a reflection of her moral formation of her children.<sup>18</sup> The author also develops the biological basis for the deep feelings experienced (uniquely) by the mother. With the implanting of the seed and its growth in the mother's womb, was implanted deep-seated emotional attachment to the child (15.6). The birth pangs that racked the mother's abdomen and genitalia further augmented this attachment (15.6–7). The topic of breast-feeding (which emerges explicitly in 16.7–8) is no doubt intended as a component of 'nurture, feeding' (τροφεία) in 15.13, though the author has not developed it explicitly as a natural process that fed the mother's affection.<sup>19</sup>

The author introduces new material on the topic of maternal love in 15.5. He asserts that a mother's love does not diminish for each of her children the more numerous those children become, as if she possessed only a limited amount of love to parcel out among a growing number, but actually grows with the number of children. The author conjoins 'weakness' with repeated childbirths (καὶ . . . καὶ . . .) as linked causes for greater maternal devotion. In the pre-industrial societies, pregnancy and childbirth are potentially life-threatening processes. To the degree that mothers put themselves at risk and pour out their own strength and vitality for the sake of bringing children into the world, to that same degree their attachment to those in whom they have invested so much of themselves increases. Taken together with the more commonly adduced topics mentioned above, this may justify the author's claim that the mother-seven-times-over 'loved her children more than any other mother' (15.6).

17 In this, the author recalls not only Aristotle, but also the more detailed observations made by Stoic authors that this likeness manifests itself not only in physical features, but also in moral and psychological properties. For example, Cleanthes declares that 'we become like our parents not only according to the body but also according to the soul, in the passions, in the habits, and in the dispositions' (*SVF* 1.518 [translation mine]), and Pseudo-Plutarch observes that Stoics, in general, 'maintain that seed derives from the entire body and from the soul and that likeness in form and character is molded from the same origins, appearing to the beholder like an image painted with the same colors' (*Plac. Philos.* V.11.3, as translated in Moses Hadas, *The Third and Fourth Books of Maccabees* [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953] 220; also *SVF* 2.749).

18 The author uses their nobility as a topic augmenting parental affection, but it could also provide a topic of consolation, as in Euripides *Hec.* 591–92: 'but the report of your nobility [in the face of death] has taken away the excess of my grief'.

19 He also does not call attention specifically to maternal embraces here (see Euripides *Tro.* 757, where Andromache exclaims, 'O child that my arms have held [ὑπαγκάλισμα], so dear to your mother!'), though he uses the topic in connection with the fostering of fraternal affection (ἐναγκαλισμάτων, 13.21).



The first common denominator between Plutarch and 4 Maccabees is that 'affection for offspring' drives parents to act to preserve the lives and well-being of their offspring, often in ways that put the parents themselves in jeopardy. Fourth Maccabees particularly highlights this face of φιλοτεκνία-in-action in 14.15–20, using examples of animal behavior very similar to those invoked by Plutarch.<sup>20</sup> The mother's natural inclinations are to protect her children from danger and rescue them from harm by any means necessary, including capitulation to the tyrant's demands, for the sake of immediate well-being.<sup>21</sup>

Acting in line with these natural impulses, however, will not reliably lead parents to do what preserves the lives and well-being of their offspring for the long term. It responds to immediate threats and dangers, but must be tempered by rational judgment with a view to preserving them from greater threats and dangers – even if that requires allowing children to suffer adverse circumstances in the immediate situation. Commitment to piety, to keeping God's covenant inviolable, has enabled the ἑπταμήτηρ to do this very thing. If she urged capitulation, she would only attain 'temporary deliverance' (σωτηρίας προσκαίρου, 15.2; τὴν πρόσκαιρον σωτηρίαν, 15.8), 'deliverance lasting for a short time' (πρὸς ὀλίγον χρόνον σωτηρίαν, 15.27), for her children, but she would then leave them exposed to the far greater danger of God's anger against the ungrateful and the consequent loss of eternal well-being. By refusing to act in line with the promptings of natural love for children, she preserves them from that greater threat and secures for them 'eternal life' (αἰωνίαν ζωὴν, 15.3). What 'love for offspring' could only wish it had the strength to achieve for its children (i.e. well-being *forever*), only love for offspring subordinated to 'love of religion' can enable.

Fourth Maccabees expands the scope of the mother's 'maternity' in a number of ways that have only opened up to her because she allowed her love for God to

<sup>20</sup> See also the analogy of the care shown by a mother bird in Euripides' *Trojan Woman*, as Andromache embraces Astyanax who has run to her for help, 'falling like some young bird into the embrace of my wings' (*Tro.* 751).

<sup>21</sup> Redditt ('The Concept of *Nomos*', 256) posits a distinction between the meanings of φύσις in discussions of fraternal and parental affection from the meaning of this term in 4 Maccabees 5 as a 'structure in harmony with which men [*sic*] ought to live'. I find, on the contrary, that it is one and the same φύσις that implants φιλοστοργία and φιλαδελφία into people's hearts as represents the harmony of the cosmic order that provides the guide to life for the philosopher. When the author (and this would be true of both the author of 4 Maccabees and Plutarch) looks to animals for clarity regarding 'natural' love of offspring, he is still looking for the 'harmony of the cosmic order' represented in the relationships between its constituent parts. Redditt's distinction appears to me to miss the significance of linking these meanings with regard to the claim being made in 4 Maccabees that Nature itself (a potential rival to Torah as ultimate norm) is an insufficient guide to virtue. It would lead Eleazar to compromise virtue if adopted as the norm in ch. 5 just as surely as it threatened to do for the brothers and the mother as they struggled with the pains born of the parental and fraternal love which φύσις implants and for which it pleads.

determine the shape of her expression of love for offspring. She gives a second and far more enduring birth to her sons – ‘rebirth for immortality’ (16.13). Like the first birthing experience, this one also involves sharp and all-consuming pains (15.17), but, like those earlier pains, these are fruitful rather than empty. The resistance of these martyrs, moreover, had political consequences for the entire nation at a critical point in its existence (1.11; 17.20–22; 18.4). By helping her sons stay the course, she also gave rebirth to the nation (hence is hailed as ‘mother of the nation’ in 15.29), her sufferings being the birth pangs of the restoration of Torah-observance and reconciliation with God that saved Israel from disaster. Her commitment to piety enabled her to bring benefit not only to her biological children, but to the generations of her spiritual ‘descendants’ in the nation of Israel, discharging her responsibility to them and becoming a symbolic maternal figure binding them together as a single family. By means of unwavering commitment to pious action before God she raises her potential as a life-giving mother to ever greater levels of efficacy. The actions of the mother thus embody not the neglect of love for offspring, nor its negation, but its perfection and fullest fruition.<sup>22</sup>

A second major point of correspondence appears in the focus on the natural processes of gestation, lactation, and nurture as all productive of affection for offspring (as well as predicated upon it) in both Plutarch and 4 Maccabees. The latter employs these topics for amplification, in particular as the means by which to show how the mother’s experience of the tortures could be as sensate and ‘physical’, in a sense, as that of the brothers, to whose bodies the instruments of torment were actually applied (14.11–12; 15.16, 22). The periods of *ekphrasis*, or ‘vivid description’, in 15.14–22 assault the audience with a series of horrific images, bringing together the seven episodes narrated in 9.10–12.19 into a single, accumulated experience, replicating the mother’s experience of the scenes that the reader has already encountered seriatim. Emphasizing the physical springs of maternal affection, located in the *σπλάγχνα* (15.23),<sup>23</sup> the author draws attention to the deeper locus for the mother’s suffering than the eyes or the ears, as if she responded merely to the horror of the *spectacle* (i.e. as the reader/hearer experiences the scenes in the narrative).<sup>24</sup> In this way, he augments the audience’s

22 The author holds this particular ‘passion’ in high esteem. ‘Natural inclination and parental love and affection for offspring’ is ‘sacred’ or ‘holy’ (15.13), in stark contrast with several other ‘passions’ that he has treated (particularly in 1.1–3.18). But, like any passion, it cannot be the ultimate, determinative guide to behavior.

23 Traditionally the seat of the emotions (Klauck, *4 Makkabaerbuch*, 745), but most appropriate here as the place where maternal love originates.

24 The relationship between the mother’s experience of the passions and her female reproductive apparatus gives particular poignancy to the author’s comments concerning reason’s imparting masculinity/courage to the mother (15.23, 28–30), as Moore and Anderson (‘Taking it Like a Man’, 265–67) skillfully explore.

appreciation of the magnitude of the mother's contest with the passions, and thus the immensity of her victory and, ultimately, the power of the Torah-observant life to prepare the human being for living a life consistent with virtue, unmoved by *any* disturbances of the soul (16.1–2).

### 3. Laments of Bereaved Mothers in 4 Maccabees and Euripides

The author uses the rhetorical technique of 'speech in character' throughout the narrative demonstration, but does so most conspicuously (since artificially) at two key points where he develops 'the road not taken' by his heroic exemplars. The first appears after Antiochus has laid out the options for the seven brothers, presenting the speech they might have made in response had they been 'faint-spirited and unmanly' (δελιόψυχοι . . . καὶ ἄνανδροι, 8.16; the speech is found in 8.17–26). The second appears after the author's depiction of the ordeal being faced by the mother, presenting the response she might have made had *she* been faint-spirited (δελιόψυχος, 16.5):<sup>25</sup>

(16.6) 'Ah, wretched me (ὦ μελέα) and many times thrice-unhappy, who, having borne seven children, have become a mother of not even one. (7) Ah, seven empty (μάταιοι) pregnancies, and seven profitless (άνόνητοι) ten-month periods, and fruitless nursings, and miserable (ταλαίπωροι) breast-feedings! (8) For nothing (μάτην), O children, I endured many pangs for you and the more burdensome concerns of rearing you. (9) Ah, my unmarried children and my married ones without progeny (άνόνητοι)! I will not see (οὐκ ὄψομαι) your children nor be blessed with being called "grandmother". (10) Ah, me, a woman with many and beautiful children (πολύπαις καὶ καλλίπαις), now a widow (χήρα) and alone, wailing bitterly! (11) Nor will I have any of my sons to bury me when I die'.

The hearers would probably recognize this as something worthy of the stage, perhaps as a lament that might have come from the stage. The speech begins with the

25 Scholars have debated whether or not the author *expects* a mother typically to prove faint-hearted. A close translation of 16.5 would read: 'For, indeed, consider this: that if the woman [were] fainthearted, although being a mother (καίπερ μήτηρ οὐδσα), she would have lamented over them'. Both Dupont-Sommer (*Quatrième Livre*, 145) and Hadas (*Fourth Maccabees*, 227) argue against reading *καίπερ* in its concessive sense here, preferring to see this clause introducing a rationale for the mother's potential faintheartedness ('being, as she was, a mother'). Previously, Deissmann ('Das vierte Makkabäerbuch', 172) had insisted on taking the *καίπερ* in its natural sense. I concur with the latter. While mothers are particularly vulnerable where their offspring are concerned, the author, who chooses his conjunctions and inferential particles with considerable care, has chosen a word that signals a concessive relationship between the concepts of maternity and faintheartedness. Motherhood is itself a proof of a particular woman's fortitude and endurance (by reason of the rigors of labor and delivery), whereas those who have not yet carried and delivered a child remain 'unproven' in this regard.

standard (often self-referential) vocative ὦ μελέα so much at home in Greek tragedy,<sup>26</sup> expressing the speaker's sorrows with melodramatic multiplication ('many-times-thrice unhappy', πολλάκις τρισαθλία).<sup>27</sup> At the speech's beginning (16.6b) and ending (16.11), the speaker draws attention to the tragic reversal of fortune that is the essence of the Greek stage, as she goes from having seven children to 'not even one', exchanging her 'many children' (πολύπαις) for 'much wailing' (πολύθρηνος).<sup>28</sup> The artful use of language to embellish the contrast, such as this last pair demonstrates, elevates this prose above ordinary speech.

The author uses topics and vocabulary familiar from lamentations placed by Euripides on the lips of mourning mothers, especially *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba*.<sup>29</sup> This is appropriate since both Hecuba and the mother of 4 Maccabees are celebrated as having especially numerous offspring.<sup>30</sup> The author may have known these laments either from reading them or, more likely, seeing them performed in his city. His knowledge of Greek language, Greek philosophical ethics, and Greek rhetoric make it quite plausible that he had equal interest in, and exposure to, Greek literature.

Hecuba laments the reversal from many children to none: 'I gave birth to children of great excellence. . . . These sons I beheld slain by the Greek spear' (*Tro.* 474–80). Common in these laments is the use of compounds of -παις, used by Hecuba in a dramatic contrast: 'I was blessed with children (εὖπαις) once, but now I am both old and childless (ἄπαις)' (*Hec.* 810; compare 4 Macc 16.6, 10). Cassandra speaks of Achaean women also 'dying in widowhood (χῆραι), while others died childless (ἄπαιδες) in their houses, having reared children all for nothing' (*Tro.* 380–1; compare 4 Macc 16.10). The 'fruitlessness' and 'purposelessness' of childrearing when the child dies prematurely is poignantly expressed by Andromache after the Greeks announce their decision to execute Astyanax, the

26 See, for example, Euripides *Tro.* 144 (ὦ μέλαι); 165 (μέλαι); 601 (ὦ μελέα).

27 Seneca also speaks of such self-referential epithets among grieving mothers as almost proverbial in *Marc.* 5.5: 'Do not, I pray you, covet that most perverse distinction – that of being considered the most unhappy of women!'

28 See also Euripides *Tro.* 101; 474–99; 1203–6; *Hec.* 55–8; 282–5; 956–60. Although the theme occurs in other plays in relation to the fates of many characters (Oedipus and Creon are noteworthy examples), Hecuba became a lasting symbol of the mutability of fortune, an association that survives in the Medieval Latin poem immortalized in Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana: Fortuna rota volvitur . . . nam sub axe legitur Hecubam reginam* ('Fortune's wheel keeps on turning . . . We read beneath its axle, "Queen Hecuba"').

29 Many of these references have been listed before (see, e.g., Klauck, *4 Makkabäerbuch*, 747–8; deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 73), but not closely explored.

30 Quotations are taken from Euripides, *Children of Heracles; Hippolytus; Andromache; Hecuba* (ed. David Kovacs; LCL; Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University, 1995) and Euripides, *Trojan Women, Iphigenia Among the Taurians, Ion* (ed. David Kovacs; LCL; Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University, 1999).

little son of the Trojan hero Hector: 'It was for nothing (διὰ κενῆς) that this breast of mine suckled you . . . and all in vain (μάτην) was my labor!' (*Tro.* 758–60; compare 4 Macc 16.8).<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Hecuba laments the death of Polydorus, 'born to no purpose (ἀνόνητα)' (*Hec.* 766; compare 4 Macc 16.7, 9). The permanence of the separation is expressed by Hecuba in terms of no longer seeing the deceased: 'No hope have I of being seen of them, no, nor of seeing them for evermore (ὀφθήσομαι . . . ὄψομαί ποτε)' (*Tro.* 487–8; compare 4 Macc 16.9).<sup>32</sup>

Deprivation of help in old age and, in particular, funerary rites is perceived to be a tremendous loss. Hecuba laments that 'Neither male child nor female, of all I have given birth to, can help the poor woman that is me' (*Tro.* 504–5), and that Astyanax will not make good on his promises to mourn at his grandmother's tomb, since she is burying him instead (*Tro.* 1180–4). Many Greek mothers are similarly deprived: 'There is no one who near their tombs will give the earth an offering of blood' (*Tro.* 382; compare 4 Macc 16.11).

The author sharply distances the mother of the seven from the feelings, convictions, character, and resultant actions exemplified by the fictive lament. It is not merely that the author wants to cast the Greek archetype of the mother in distress as less stalwart than the Jewish mother, for the author could not have been unaware of stories circulated in the Greek culture about women who showed stalwart courage in the face of death, including the deaths of their children.<sup>33</sup> Nor does the author intend to impugn the Greek tragic heroines for their examples upon the stage. But he does wish to make clear that the person instructed by the Torah has come to a different view of death, one that naturally enables greater courage and hope in the face of death (and, therefore, greater resources to help them overcome the onslaught of the passions in life-threatening circumstances).

31 Seneca imagines a similar objection, based on a parent not enjoying the anticipated (and justly expected) return of benefits from her deceased son, being voiced by Marcia: 'I shall have no one to protect me, no one to keep me from being despised' (*Marc.* 19.2). The emphasis on childlessness in these laments generally, and the absence of grandchildren in 4 Maccabees in particular, may work to intensify the experience of grief by denying a common topic of consolation, namely the common topic of considering the comfort to be had from remaining family members, especially surviving children and grandchildren (see Seneca *Marc.* 16.6–8; *Polyb.* 12.1; *Helv.* 18.2, 4).

32 Seneca employs the topic of no longer 'seeing' the loved one, and thus the loss of the enjoyment of face-to-face interaction with the loved one, in a fictive lament placed on the lips of his own mother (deprived of seeing her son on account of his exile).

33 Particularly noteworthy is the attitude of Lacaena, a Spartan mother, who responds to news about her son's death in battle thus: 'To that end . . . had I borne him, to be a man who should not hesitate to meet death for his country' (Cicero *Tusc.* 1.102; LCL). By dying in line with prized virtues, the child brought to full fruition his life and his mother's nurture. See also Plutarch, *Mulierum virtutes* (discussed in deSilva, 4 *Maccabees*, 70, 80–84) and the literature discussed in Moore and Anderson, 'Taking it Like a Man', 267–68.

Caution is required when assessing the author's claim that the mother did not weep (15.19), nor shed tears (15.20), nor wail, lament, and 'grieve as they were dying' (16.12). It would be easy to be led astray by such claims into thinking that the author has moved into contradiction, as exhibited by at least one fine scholar: 'While the author of 4 Macc consistently emphasizes mastery rather than extirpation, the examples of Eleazar, the seven brothers and the mother clearly suggest the *apatheia* which was attained by the Cynic and Stoic sages . . . and the accompanying experience of *aponia* ("toil-lessness" or lack of pain)'.<sup>34</sup> This same author finds the author 'repeatedly emphasizing that these courageous martyrs experience no human suffering'.<sup>35</sup>

On the contrary, the author of 4 Maccabees leaves room for the human experience of these emotions,<sup>36</sup> expecting 'affection for offspring' to bring the mother into an experience of deep, abject suffering. He amplifies the mother's actual experience of her sons' misery and her own grief to promote his rhetorical goals. The more frenzied the experience of passion through which Torah-observance enables one to remain steady in one's moral purpose, the more fully he can laud the Jewish way of life as the superior ethical philosophy. The mother thus *feels* *συμπάθειαν* (the shared, inward experience of anguish) with her children in their 'varied tortures' (15.11). Her mettle is tested by 'sharper pains' (*πικροτέρων πόνων*) than those very real pains of labor and delivery (15.16). She is 'tortured with such diverse and many tortures' as were being inflicted upon the bodies of her sons (15.22). She was 'overwhelmed from every side by the flood of the passions' (15.32) and felt her innate parental love raging more furiously than Daniel's lions and more intensely inflamed than the furnace that assaulted the three young men (16.3–4). In all these statements, we hear nothing of 'toil-lessness' and everything of brave endurance in the face of the experience of horrific pains. Indeed, the whole point of the *ekphrasis* of 15.14–15, 18–22 is to amplify the audience's sense of

34 D. C. Aune, 'Mastery of the Passions: Philo, 4 Maccabees and Earliest Christianity', *Hellenization Revisited: Shaping a Christian Response within the Greco-Roman World* (ed. Wendy Helleman; Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994) 125–58 (esp. 136).

35 Aune, 'Mastery', 137. Against this position, see A. O'Hagan, 'The Martyr in the Fourth Book of Maccabees', *SBFLA* 24 (1974) 94–120 (101): the author 'does not slip into the Stoic philosophic extreme of insensitivity and complete indifference: the technical terms *ἀπαθεία* and *ἀναίσθηρία* never occur in 4 Maccabees, and the other two great Stoic words *ἐγκράτεια* (5.34) and *ἀταραξία* (8.26) only once each with greatly diminished impact'.

36 In regard to the martyrdoms of the brothers, the narrator asserts that the fifth brother was 'in anguish of body' (11.11), affirming that the brothers actually experienced the most intense kinds of sufferings (14.9–10) – in pointed contrast to the hearers' armchair experience of his report concerning those sufferings. The sixth brother's taunt that the tyrant's 'fire is cold' and 'catapults painless', therefore must constitute a hyperbolic expression of the tyrant's impotence to compel them to act against their will (the fact that his 'violence' is 'powerless', 11.24–25). It is not a report about the martyr's lack of physical sensation.

the magnitude of the mother's sufferings (15.13, 16–17) and thus her achievement (15.11–12, 14, 23). It is not that she remains untouched by these sufferings, but that she remains unmoved in her moral purpose by them (15.11, 14). Her will remains fixed on pursuing piety and enabling piety in her sons to the end, no matter how much it hurts her and her dear boys.

Euripides's *Hecuba* illumines the significance of the mother's refusal to cry, wail, or grieve. Polyxena, one of Hecuba's last surviving daughters, has nobly decided to accept her fate and die at Achilles's grave rather than plead for her life, dying as a model of nobility for the whole Greek army, but her mother's quite natural expressions of grief have a strong effect on her. After Hecuba and Polyxena have fallen into a lament together, and Hecuba pitifully wails, 'I am already dead before my death, killed by my misfortunes', Polyxena asks Odysseus to take her away, 'for the heart within me, before my slaughter, has been made to melt with the lamentations of my mother, and I melt her heart with mine' (*Hec.* 431–434). The melting of the heart is a common image for the softening of resolve, something in which Polyxena can no longer indulge if she is to achieve the noble death she has set for herself. Hecuba, in fact, cries out after her as she departs, 'Ah, ah! I am faint! My limbs are unstrung! Daughter, take hold of your mother, stretch out your hand, give it to me, do not leave me childless!' (*Hec.* 438–440). It is clear that Hecuba would turn Polyxena from her resolve, and turn back the tide of events, if she could.

The mother of the seven sons will not do as Hecuba did. She feels the pains as bitterly as could be felt, but she will not weaken in her resolve, nor do those things that would weaken *her sons' resolve*. Thus she refuses to cry, shed tears, and do those things generally that elicit pity and would add to her sons' burden. She had to master her own feelings (and their visible expression) so that she could be available to help her sons master theirs (15.12).<sup>37</sup> The relationship between the mother's visible expression of grief and the effects on the children is brought into sharper focus in 16.12: 'But the holy and god-revering mother was bewailing none with this dirge, nor was she attempting to dissuade any of them so that they would not die'.

Dissuasion would be the force of such a lament. With or without words, bringing her feelings to her face would cry out 'pity me' and undermine her admonition to 'keep faith with God' (16.22).<sup>38</sup> The lament that the author has crafted, largely

37 Compare the explicit invocation of this topic in Seneca *Polyb.* 5.4: 'This is the way that great generals act in times of disaster – they purposely make pretense of cheerfulness, and conceal their misfortunes by feigning joy, lest the soldiers themselves should likewise grow faint-hearted if they saw the spirit of their leader broken'. Seneca argues that it is Polybius's duty to provide a strong example for his surviving brothers, so that the latter will not lose heart in the midst of their own grief for the deceased.

38 The NRSV translates πίστις πρὸς τὸν θεόν as 'faith in God', but πίστις here denotes another facet of the faith-based relationship, namely faithfulness toward God (V. C. Pfitzner, *Paul and the Agon Motif: Traditional Athletic Imagery in the Pauline Literature* [Leiden: Brill, 1967] 64–65; van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs*, 131–2; deSilva, *4 Maccabees*, 120).



from traditional literary motifs, presents a whole list of rationales on the basis of which the children could indeed elevate pity for their mother above keeping faith with God (pregnancies, the pangs of childbirths, nursing, nurturing, and the watchful care that mothers provide throughout the child's life, all with no return for her benevolence should they all perish).<sup>39</sup> On the contrary, this pious mother will urge her sons to keep faith with God and give their full attention to giving God a fair return for his gift of life and a share in this world (16.18–19), not placing her own desires and desserts above God's due.<sup>40</sup>

The mother also refuses to lament and to grieve because she does not share the dominant culture's estimation of what makes motherhood 'profitable', having been taught by Torah (and by the development of personal eschatology in the Second Temple period) about lasting 'profit'. According to the latter view, the deaths of the seven sons were not a loss, but a preservation. For Hecuba and Andromache, the deaths of their children constituted their alienation from those whom they loved and the shipwreck of their maternal investment. For example, Andromache equates death (here, in relation to her sister Polyxena rather than her son Astyanax, whose sentence has not yet been made known) with non-being, the equivalent of not having been born (Euripides *Tro.* 635–642). The same principle applied to Astyanax would mean the erasure of her entire experience of motherhood.

For the ἐπαμίτηρ, however, the deaths of her sons meant their transference to the realm in which they would never again be separated from her, thus the 'perfection' of her investment. It marked the completion and full fruition of her work as a mother who loved her children, whose task it was not simply to give birth and nurture for their lives in this world, but to give them 'rebirth for immortality' by

39 In Sinaiticus (favored as the original reading by Dupont-Sommer [*Quatrième Livre*, 131] and Klauck [*4 Makkabäerbuch*, 734]), 4 Macc 12.6 also makes explicit the connection between the experience of grief and the resultant action of dissuasion. Prior to the torture and death of the seventh and last son, Antiochus brings the mother forward 'in order that, taking pity on herself as she was bereft of so many sons, she might urge the remaining one on toward the ready obedience bringing deliverance' (ὅπως [ε]αυτήν ἐλεήσασα τοσούτων υἱῶν στερηθεῖσαν παρορμήσειεν ἐπὶ τὴν σωτήριον εὐπέθειαν τὸν περιλειπούμενον). He expects the mother to 'break' like Hecuba did at the prospect of losing Polyxena, and thus join him in trying to weaken the last son's resolve.

40 The author's reasoning superficially resembles Epictetus's injunction that children are to be given back to the Giver when demanded (*Diatr.* IV.1.107; *Ench.* 11). However, the author does not share Epictetus's objectification of children as external things (alongside property, offices, reputation, and one's physical well-being), and therefore things to be released, like any other external good, for the sake of maintaining unperturbedness (*Diatr.* IV.7.35). Rather, they are the active agents who render God the service that is *their* duty by returning life for the gift of life. Moreover, by releasing her children for God's sake, she preserves their family relationships for eternity rather than surrendering them upon death as something 'not our own' (see Epictetus *Diatr.* III.3.15; III.19.1; IV.1.67, 87, 100, 111; IV.7.35; *Frag.* 3; *Ench.* 18).

nurturing their unshakable rootedness in God and in covenant loyalty (as in 16.18–19).<sup>41</sup> Motherhood is *not* in vain if the children die as a result of their commitment to the virtues instilled by their parents, since for their steadfast commitment to God (16.18–19) they will live eternally with God (16.25). Rather than grieving, which would undermine the credibility of this conviction, the mother allows her conviction that she would enjoy her sons forever if they but hold fast now to temper her own response and give her, in fact, the 'edge' she needs to master her passions.<sup>42</sup> The author provides in 17.5–6 a pictorial confirmation of her hope: the last image of this mother (within this particular section) is of her surrounded, once more, by her seven sons, now honored in the court of God forever, an image superceding the graphic depiction of them degraded in the court of Antiochus.<sup>43</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

The author's portrayal of the mother's deep feelings for her seven sons, the pains of seeing them suffer at the hands of Antiochus's guards, the response that she refused to indulge, and, indeed, the response she did make all continue to bear witness to his thoroughgoing interaction with – and valuing of – Greek philosophical thought and literary expression. He uses these not so much to build stark barriers between his Jewish audience and the Greek *culture* around them, as to assert that, as long as their commitment to Torah-observance remains unyielding (and the barriers strong in that regard), they will continue to embody the highest values embraced by their neighbors and even surpass the Greek philosophers' highest expectations.

By submitting even what is commendable in their nature to the demands of piety rather than taking Nature as the final norm, they both continue to embody a life in accordance with Nature and bring Nature's implanted drives to a higher level of fruitfulness. Because of their hope in God, they are able to face extreme

41 Epictetus (*Diatr.* I.11.21–26) expresses broad agreement as he argues that natural affection demands rendering our children assistance even when it is painful for us to see them in distress (rather than trying to avoid the distressing sights or circumstances).

42 In 1 Thess 4.13, Paul similarly leaves room for the experience of pain at the loss of Christian sisters and brothers, but draws attention to the resources of hope for life beyond death so that grief takes a distinctive form.

43 Fourth Maccabees most resembles a 'consolation' here as the author addresses the mother in an apostrophe to urge her to 'take heart' in the midst of the grisly scene of loss in Antiochus's court on the basis of the post-mortem reunion she would enjoy with her sons. Seneca twice utilizes the presumed blessedness of a post-mortem existence, specifically shedding the moral coil with its 'blemishes and stain' and reunion with the 'saintly band', the heroes of old and family members who welcome the deceased, in his consolations (*Marc.* 25.1–2; *Polyb.* 9.3).

hardship with a fortitude seen only rarely in the Greek world, replacing any sense of self-pity with hope for God's renewal of their fortunes in the life to come. Through his portrayal of the mother, the author thus demonstrates that the virtues and goods prized by all are most securely held by the pious Jew.