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Gendered Language and the Construction of Jewish Identity in 2 Maccabees

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Gendered Language and the Construction of Jewish Identity in 2 Maccabees

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When thinking about Judaism and gender, it is a common misconception to assume that the interface between the two is an exclusively modern phenomenon. According to conventional wisdom, Judaism is an ancient construction steeped in the scientific and sociocultural sensibilities of people who lived long before the contemporary distinction between sex and gender came to be articulated as such. Yet as that distinction has made its way into the discipline of Jewish studies, several scholars have observed that the ancient sages who authored Judaism's Talmudic intellectual canon exhibited acute anxieties about the instability of gender binaries analogous to those detected by contemporary gender theorists in modern texts. Thus, they have proposed to look within classical Jewish texts for signs of non-binary gender identities later written out of Judaism by self-appointed regulators of rabbinic orthodoxy.¹

In this paper I hope to contribute to this project with a discussion of the earliest text that identifies Jewish culture as "Judaism." This text is 2 Maccabees, a second-century BCE Jewish composition predating the Talmudic era and preserved exclusively in Christian scriptural traditions. I shall contend that the author of 2 Maccabees used gendered language in his construction of Judaism to make the point that women were just as likely as men to exemplify its values, a point lost on subsequent Jewish generations who propagated more strictly hierarchical gender regimes. Finally, I argue that it is useful to understand 2 Maccabees' negotiations between Jewish and Greek culture in the work.

Interrogating Jewish Identity in Antiquity

Before considering how 2 Maccabees articulates its author's sense of Judaism, it will be instructive to address what it meant to be a Jew in antiquity.² Conventional wisdom has it that it meant something not unlike what it means to be a Jew today, namely to identify in whole or in part with the multifaceted religious, ethnic, and cultural system traditionally known as Judaism.³ Yet the very premise of describing "Jews" and "Judaism" in antiquity has been challenged [End Page 107] of late, eliciting a minor scholarly imbroglio with far-reaching implications for the documentation of the Jewish past.⁴ That debate is a consequence of an apologetic trend in biblical scholarship that started in the mid-twentieth century. After the Holocaust, Christian theologians became sensitive to the ills of antisemitism and sought to dull the sharp rhetoric against the Jews embedded within their sacred texts. Their solution, as it were, was to change the translation of the Greek term *ioudaios* (plural: *ioudaioi*), a linguistic cognate of "Jew" utilized in the New Testament and traditionally understood to indicate the Jewish identities of Jesus' opponents. As the hostile portrait of those Jews had given Jews in general a bad reputation in Christian discourse, scholars took to rendering *ioudaios* no longer as "Jew," but as "Judean," an ostensibly value-neutral demonym indicating nothing more than its subject's association with the long-since-vanished territory of Judea. The Christian animosity once heaped upon the Jews was thereby redirected toward the Judeans, a people who could not possibly be offended since they no longer existed as such.⁵

Yet what began as a well-meaning effort to circumvent the vilification of the Jew in early Christian texts eventually went off course. In his new edition of the writings of the first-century CE Jewish chronicler Flavius Josephus, Steve Mason decided to take the premise of recasting Jews as Judeans to its logical conclusion. Following the precedent of New Testament scholarship, Mason opted to render the generations of *ioudaioi* documented by Josephus as Judeans, effectively erasing every last Jew from the historian's work.⁶ He explained his rationale in a subsequent publication addressed to his detractors,⁷ first noting that the Greek word *ioudaios* and its Latin cognate *iudaeus* were commonly understood in antiquity to indicate one's nationality or ethnicity. According to Mason, the reinvention of the ethnic "Judean" as a religious "Jew" was the result of an invidious Christian arrogation of the terminology in

question. Early Christian writers seeking to malign the erstwhile adversaries of Jesus, Mason maintained, cast his disbelieving countrymen as negative antitypes to his devoted followers. In this reading, it was Christian discourse that transformed the term "Judean," so that it no longer indicated the Judeans' origin but, rather, their adamant rejection of the gospel. When in the fourth century Christianity was adopted as the official religion of Rome, its tendentious misconstruction of Judean ethnicity took on the quality of a religious distinction commensurate with today's "Jew." Thus, Mason holds that in this process Judaism, or, in Greek, *ioudaismos*, a term theretofore seldom used by the Judeans themselves, became a monstrous mirror-image of the true religion of the Church. Judeans living under Roman rule thereby found themselves forced to play the roles of "Jews" as scripted by an imperial apparatus given to indiscriminate prejudice against their kind.

Mason's argument has been criticized on a number of counts, of which I shall detail only a few here.⁸ To my mind, his most egregious error is his rigorous distinction between the epistemological domains of ethnicity and religion. Neither the Greeks nor the Romans nor those whom they knew as *ioudaioi* assumed that distinction. To their minds, to claim affiliation with a given nation meant not necessarily to trace one's lineage to its people but, more importantly, **[End Page 108]** to profess their customary values and to practice their customary rites.⁹ The Greek term *ioudaios*, like its Hebrew and Aramaic etymological antecedents, thus signified more than merely descent from the people of the bygone Kingdom of Judah. It signified affiliation with Judah's still functioning national cult, the cult of Yahweh in Jerusalem. From a semantic standpoint, therefore, one may reasonably say that the term *ioudaios* bore no certain "religious" connotations until the Church laid claim to the Roman concept of religion and extended its compass to the Jews. But to maintain that it implied nothing about what most modern observers would recognize as their religious sensibilities is to ignore the wealth of evidence indicating otherwise.¹⁰

Mason furthermore errs in his intimation that the modern practice of Jewish identity follows the dictates of a legal taxonomy categorically denying the Jews their national constitution. While Christian legislators beholden to the universal gospel naturally repudiated the idea that the "children of Israel" (in biblical language) belonged to a specific ethnic order, the Jews themselves never fully subscribed to that conceit. To the contrary, even though Enlightenment and emancipation had brought new pressures to think of Judaism predominantly as a religion, this conception has never completely replaced the established Jewish self-understanding as positively defined by a compound of national and cultic bonds from time immemorial.¹¹ To insist, therefore, that the term "Jew" signifies in the contemporary frame of reference nothing but a religion is to betray a profoundly insensitive theological bias denying the Jewish people their right of self-definition. To that end, one might further question the ethical implications of severing modern Jews from their ancient forebears through semantic sleight of hand.¹² Frankly, I am troubled by the prospect of seeing my people stricken from the record of classical antiquity for the sake of mollifying Christian guilt over the Holocaust. That is a genocide of another kind.

To be clear, I concur with Mason that it is a mistake to speak of "Jews" and "Judaism" in antiquity as though those terms signified precisely what they signify today, especially considering the variety of meanings attached to them in different discursive contexts. But that, I contend, is a necessary function of the evolution of language. I therefore consider Mason's wholesale reinvention of ancient Jews as "Judeans" misguided, beyond its original function as an apologetic exegetical device. Nevertheless, Mason's challenge has elicited a useful reevaluation of how "Jewish" ancient Jews were, and this current critical effort also informs my reading of 2 Maccabees.

Judaism and Otherness in 2 Maccabees

Let us begin with a brief description of 2 Maccabees.¹³ Written in Greek, the book is preserved among the apocryphal texts of the Catholic and Orthodox Christian Bibles. Its received text includes in its opening chapters two letters addressed to the Jews of Ptolemaic Egypt. The letters include information dating them to the years 143/142 BCE and 125/124 BCE respectively, and I hold **[End Page 109]** that 125/124 BCE should be taken as the *terminus ante quem* (latest possible date) of the book's composition. The second letter segues into a prologue that indicates that the book's historical narrative is based on a now lost work written by one Jason of Cyrene. Precisely who Jason was or how he knew of the events he documented is uncertain. To what extent the anonymous author of the history in 2 Maccabees reworked his source material from Jason of Cyrene is also unclear. We are therefore unable to say precisely whose experience or perspective the account in 2 Maccabees represents.¹⁴ Clearly, however, the author's design suited the Hasmonean kings who governed Judea when the letters were dispatched.¹⁵ Both missives exhort the Egyptian Jewish community to observe the festival on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev recently instituted by the Hasmoneans, that is, the festival today known as Hanukkah. The prologue thus frames the book's main narrative, which details the circumstances of the new festival's creation, namely the Seleucid persecution of the Jews in 167 BCE and the popular uprising that followed.

It is in the midst of this prologue that the author introduces the term "Judaism" or, in Greek, *ioudaismos*.¹⁶ Notably, this is the first instance of that term on record, and it is possible that the author invented the word specifically for the purpose of his historical exposition. Summarizing the narrative to follow, he tells in his characteristically dense Greek prose of

... the story of Judah the Maccabee and his brothers and the purification of the greatest Temple and the dedication of the altar and, further, the wars against Antiochus Epiphanes and his son Eupator and the appearances that came from heaven to those who behaved themselves manfully for Judaism so that though few in number they seized the whole land and pursued the barbarian hordes and regained possession of the Temple famous throughout the world and liberated the city and reestablished the laws that were about to be abolished, while the Lord with great kindness became gracious to them.¹⁷

The author thus expresses his belief that God allowed the "barbarian" Greeks temporarily to rain terror over Jerusalem on account of what he proceeds to describe as the moral failures of its priestly leaders during the years leading up to the outbreak of hostilities.¹⁸ In contrast to this misguided behavior, he describes as "Judaism" what the courageous few Jews stood up for. When these righteous Jews put an end to the tyranny of Antiochus, God's anger with his people subsided.

But what, precisely, did the author mean by "Judaism"? He provides some hints. It involved land. It involved God and his laws. It involved Jerusalem and its Temple. What the author therefore presents as a readily intelligible abstraction of his people's common *modus vivendi* encompasses both its ethnic and its religious aspects. As if to underscore that point, he proceeds to tell of the "ancestral honors" and "divine laws" neglected by Jerusalem's priestly overseers prior to Antiochus's disastrous visit. He accuses the High Priest Jason of having provoked God's anger with his Hellenism (*hēllēnismos*), that is, his acculturation to Greek ways, and his consequent distraction from his ritual obligations at the Temple.¹⁹ In failing to see to the upkeep of the Temple's daily **[End Page 110]** sacrificial liturgies, misusing its financial reserves, and violating its sacred space with profane activities, Jason, the author intimates,

violated God's covenant with his people. Being a proper Jew, he thereby implies, is not merely a matter of belonging to the Jewish nation. It is also a matter of conducting oneself appropriately with respect to the inheritance God had bestowed upon that nation. It requires dutifully maintaining the traditions of the Jewish past.²⁰

Much has been made of the book's novel deployment of the terms "Judaism" and "Hellenism." For some time, scholars of antiquity tended to set them in opposition to one another, reading the text as a description of a hostile encounter between traditionalist Jews and Jews who favored the exotic new religious and political mores of the Greeks.²¹ More recently, however, scholars have taken into account the book's thoroughly Hellenized idiom and argued that the author meant to present Judaism and Hellenism not as opposite lifestyles but, rather, as two of a kind, separated only by certain inviolable boundaries pertaining to cultic practice.²² Mason, for his part, reads the author's *ioudaismos* as an ironic inversion of *hēllēnismos*, which term the Greeks themselves used to describe what they deemed the pathetic spectacle of foreigners trying to speak their language. The author's Judaism, as it were, therefore represents no coherent religious ideology. It is merely a jibe at those Jews who, like Jason and the other allegedly corrupt priests, wished to imagine themselves as Greeks.²³ I find that explanation unconvincing. The only people said in 2 Maccabees to engage in *ioudaismos* are Jews.²⁴ There is nothing ironic about Jews acting like Jews. As for acting like Greeks, I suspect that the author's purpose was not to mock his fellow Jews for trying, but to warn his readers against taking the act too far. In other words, he found Hellenism objectionable only insofar as its pursuit stood to intrude upon Judaism. Tellingly, he impugns Jason's Hellenism as *allophyllismos*, another apparent neologism signifying something akin to the modern philosophical concept of alterity or otherness.²⁵ To the author's mind, the crime of the Jewish high priest was not that he spoke or acted like a Greek; many Jews of his age entertained that sort of acculturation without visibly incurring the wrath of God. Jason's offense was that he allowed the ways of the Greeks so thoroughly to overtake him that he neglected the Jewish rites that he was appointed to safeguard. According to the author of 2 Maccabees this amounted to Jason's betrayal of the national and cultic obligations that defined his relationship with the Jewish people. To be sure, he held that Jason remained a Jew, despite his Hellenic proclivities. That, to his mind, was precisely what made Jason so dangerous. By violating the terms of God's agreement with their ancestors, the author believed, Israel's chief cultic officer compromised the welfare of his entire people.

There is more to the author's construction of Judaism than I discuss here, but I do not claim to offer a full account of his cultural strategy in this essay.²⁶ For the sake of my argument it suffices to note that what the anonymous author called "Judaism" seems to have been an ideal for living a certain lifestyle that he apparently shared with other right-minded Jews of his age. Yet the author's sense of what made a Jew a Jew was not strictly a matter of conforming to ancient laws or bloodlines. Apparently in agreement with his fellow Jews, **[End Page 111]** he posited that Judaism meant balancing those traditional values with the values and the culture of his Hellenized environment. The author thus described and endorsed a cultural calculus that is not contained in a mutually exclusive Judaism/Hellenism binary, and that is still familiar to those of us who continue to trade in the business of Jewish identity to this day. That, I submit, is what he meant to say about Judaism in asserting that one ought to act "manfully" in its defense.

Behaving "Manfully" for Judaism

Jews in antiquity were not what we would call today especially enlightened on matters of gender equity. From Israel's earliest days, through the age of the Talmud, and up to the very recent past, men tended to set the collective agenda of the Jews. Of course, that tendency was hardly unique to the Jews. One authority on the subject states the case plainly: "Ancient Judaism, like all other cultures and societies in antiquity, was androcentric, that is, it placed men at the center and assumed men to be the norm."²⁷ I would not contest that claim, and certainly not with respect to 2 Maccabees. One notes, for example, androcentrism in the author's allusions to the ancestral ways of his people. What the Jews held in common, he averred, were their fatherly honors, their fatherly laws, their fatherly feasts, and their fatherly tongue.²⁸ He calls the Israelites their fathers and their country their fatherland.²⁹ Thus the Judaism of 2 Maccabees might not have possessed an overtly masculinist agenda or an active patriarchal program, but androcentrism was at least a matter of linguistic habit, as though its author lacked the words to describe its esteemed subjects in any other way. It presumably would not have occurred to that author or his readers that describing Judaism in such terms could seem exclusive or divisive.

Yet the erasure of women in some of the author's language is in tension with the visibility of women in his account. For women are among the individuals whom the author valorizes as paragons of Judaism. Recounting, for instance, the first victims of Antiochus's edict, he draws special attention to two women found to have circumcised their newborn sons in accord with their ancestral laws. The king's troops reportedly paraded the women through Jerusalem with their babies hanging from their breasts before hurling them from the city's walls to their deaths.³⁰ Since nothing more is said about these women, one can only deduce that the author counted them among the other nameless victims killed for refusing, in his words, "to change over to Greek customs."³¹

These brief accounts are followed by two elaborate tales of Jewish resistance. The first involves an elderly scribe named Eleazar, who is executed for "manfully" (*andreiōs*) refusing to consume a sacrificial meal of swine's flesh.³² The second story involves an unnamed woman and her seven sons, who are brought before Antiochus and forced to partake of another illicit offering.³³ One by one, the young men are summoned to the throne and challenged to eat the polluted meat. Yet each one rebukes the king and is promptly put to [End Page 112] death. As their mother helplessly watches, she encourages them in eloquent Platonic speech to submit to death, confident that God will restore them to life in due time. When only one son remains, Antiochus, now desperate to avoid humiliation, tries to bribe the boy to comply with his order. The king pleads with the woman to convince her son to cooperate. But the woman merely repeats what she told his brothers. The young man thus defies Antiochus, insouciantly warning him that God shall exact vengeance on the evil king once he has finished disciplining the Jews. Finally, having lost all her sons, the woman suffers the same fate as her children.³⁴

The subjects of these gruesome stories are conventionally known as the Maccabean martyrs, a reputation owing to their canonization as saints in the Catholic and Orthodox Christian traditions.³⁵ Their retroactive association with the martyrs of Christian legend stems from the fact that early Christian theologians tended to claim Israel's ancient luminaries as their own. Indeed, just as Christian theologians later reckoned those tragic witnesses as champions of their faith, the author of 2 Maccabees intimates that those Jews who submitted to torture rather than violate their ancestral principles sustained their entire nation until God himself appointed Judah the Maccabee and his brothers, who then delivered the Jews from peril.³⁶ To his mind, those who acted "manfully" for Judaism during the Seleucid persecution

accomplished nothing less than the salvation of the Jewish people. That those brave few happened to include women he seems to assume as a matter of course.

In order to appreciate the ingenuity of the author's turn of phrase, one must consider its linguistic signification. The expression I have rendered as "behaved themselves manfully" represents a form of the Greek verb *andragatheō*, which combines the noun, *anēr*, or man, and the adjective *agathos*, or good, thereby expressing the ideal of being a good man. That ideal was rooted in the Stoic virtue of *andreia*, a term typically translated as "courage" or "bravery" but literally signifying masculinity.³⁷ Moral philosophers of the Hellenistic age routinely invoked *andreia* as a trait of utmost importance for the conscientious citizen ever ready to take up arms in defense of his nation. That, it seems, is the plain sense of the expression in 2 Maccabees. The author instinctively deemed courageous those of his fellow Jews who put their lives at risk for the sake of their people, as though casting them as model members of the Greek-style Jewish nation-state to be established by the Hasmoneans in the wake of their rebellion.³⁸ To his mind, therefore, to exemplify Judaism meant not merely to be born into the Jewish nation but, more importantly, to act like a man on its behalf.³⁹

Lest one suspect the author of treating his heroines condescendingly, one must further consider the epistemology of gender he relied on. Classical Greek medical science encompassed what Thomas Laqueur has characterized as the one-sex theory of human physiology whereby men and women were thought to possess the same reproductive organs, albeit in different anatomical arrangements.⁴⁰ Those bodies conditioned *in utero* to externalize those organs were born as males. Those conditioned to internalize their reproductive organs were born as females. Given, therefore, that males generally were observed to **[End Page 113]** be more dominant than females, females were construed as biologically inferior or weaker versions of males. But sex was not thought to determine what we now know as gender, at least not uniformly. Because those subscribing to the one-sex theory considered male and female two positions on a variable physiological scale, they held that persons exhibiting male anatomical traits could also exhibit typically female behaviors and those exhibiting female anatomical traits could exhibit male behaviors.⁴¹ That, of course, was not considered the ideal in a well-ordered civil society. Men were supposed to act like men and women like women. Hence the resolve of the philosophers to recommend *andreia* to the young men of social privilege who would be their leaders, lest they fall short of their biological potentials.⁴²

Laqueur's analysis of the Greek gender order helps us to understand the gendered language of 2 Maccabees. The concept that women are capable of masculine behavior explains why the author could commend the women who suffered during the Seleucid persecution for their "manfulness." His curious choice of verbiage might seem hopelessly misogynistic today. Yet, I would argue, his intent was not to offend. It was, rather, to praise his heroines for their bravery, as if lauding them as manly did not denigrate their femaleness. In fact, expanding the meaning of *andreia* by ascribing it to exceptionally shrewd or courageous women was a fairly common ploy in classical Greek literature.⁴³ It worked as a literary trope because it both relied on the notion that maleness and bravery were linked, and at the same time subverted the concept that "manliness" was an exclusively male characteristic. Therefore, although the author of 2 Maccabees did not invent the idea of women acting like men, he used it in a novel context. He deployed this Greek literary device for the exaltation of Judaism when he claimed that the nameless mother of his tale, who urged her last surviving son to submit to torture, "reinforced her woman's reasoning with a man's courage."⁴⁴ He believed that the wise old Eleazar, a man, simultaneously proved his masculinity and his Judaism by refusing the king's order; and along the same

lines he intimated that the woman proved hers by overcoming her natural maternal instinct and showing manly courage, rather than trying to protect her children from death.

That the author of 2 Maccabees thought individuals both male and female capable of acting "manfully" for Judaism speaks to what I cited earlier as the profoundly Hellenized quality of that construction. Clearly, the Greek ideal of *andreia* was integral to what he presumed to communicate to his readers as the ancestral values they shared with those of their fellow Jews who endured the Seleucid persecution. Those women who gave their lives and their children's lives in order to preserve their nation did what the author believed all devoted Jews in their situation ought to have done. Consequently, his conception of Jewish identity was perhaps androcentric in its language—as the concept of *andreia* associated essential virtues with men—but it was arguably egalitarian in effect. Thus, what the author knew as the traditions of the fathers he pointedly affirmed belonged to men as well as to women. God would not discriminate on the basis of sex.⁴⁵ To be sure, the author's intimation that women could exemplify Judaism under the threat of death does not imply that he endorsed **[End Page 114]** the idea of women being equal to men in every aspect of their lives. But his logic is easily inferred. If, as he asserts, every child of Israel, whether male or female, could choose to act manfully for Judaism in times of extreme duress, how much more so should one make that choice in ordinary circumstances?

Conclusions

Although the *ioudaismos* of 2 Maccabees must not be mistaken for a definitive or programmatic statement of ancient Judaism, I believe it suggests a cohesive statement of what its author deemed the common Jewish mores of his time. As noted, those values were neither definitively ethnic nor definitively religious. Rather, they were integrally ethnic and religious, embodying an object of cultural identification that would have been intelligible to all Jews of the author's era trained on the traditions of Israel's storied past.⁴⁶ What was new about his paradigm was its liberal infusion of Greek values. As though acknowledging that he and his readers held both their Judaism and their Hellenism in common, the author of 2 Maccabees meant to warn them about just how much Greek "otherness" was too much. According to his reckoning, should a Jew's attraction to the ways of the Greeks diminish his or her commitment to the ways of the Jews, that Jew no longer exemplifies Judaism. That ambiguous postulate continues to reverberate in debates over the boundaries of Jewish identity to this day.

My analysis of how coherence and difference operate in 2 Maccabees lead me to the following conclusions. Firstly, my findings on the Judaism of 2 Maccabees correct some of the mistaken assumptions that lead to the recent debate over whether ancient "Judeans" were, in fact, Jews. To be sure, I do not mean to equate the Judaism of 2 Maccabees with the Judaism of the Talmud or the Judaism of the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, I would maintain that its symbiotic amalgam of national and religious aspects has remained integral to the identities practiced by self-professed Jews from the biblical age to our own, even if the relative merits of certain of those aspects have been put into question at times. For Jews, at least, that categorical indeterminacy about whether the national or the religious element establishes Jewishness has been the norm throughout history. It is the modern social-scientific approach that considers Judaism as merely a religion or merely an ethnicity that is the anomaly.⁴⁷ Consequently, unless one is to disregard the Jewish experience as a whole, one cannot help but to see in the genre-defying formulation of 2 Maccabees a prescient vision of how Jews would proceed to define their collective enterprise over the centuries following the book's composition.

Secondly, I find the author's construction of Judaism illuminating of his sense of the inadequacy of binarism as a strategy of cultural identification for his group. His refusal to limit his thinking to simple dichotomies is clear in his construction of Hellenism as the common property of the Greek and the Jew. It is just as clear in his awkward but well-meaning construction of "manly" courage as the property of both men and women. In choosing to portray his **[End Page 115]** female defenders of Judaism as equals to their male counterparts with respect to their courage and commitment, the author of 2 Maccabees exhibited no discernible gender anxiety of the sort later to be exhibited by the rabbinic sages. As though glossing over the pervasive patriarchy of prior Jewish law and lore, he imbued his Judaism with an egalitarian spirit that was subtly but incisively defiant of the prevailing sensibilities of his age. He wanted his readers to know that women could be just as Jewish as the men who took up arms to defend their people following the onset of the Seleucid persecution. That lesson, it seems, was within the boundaries of what he deemed acceptable appropriation of Greek wisdom, and it might have inspired or at least been paralleled by the author's rejection of the Judaism/Hellenism binary.

Although I have argued that the author challenged the male/female binary as it pertained to Jewish identity, I would be remiss not to acknowledge his language also affirmed the existing gender hierarchy. To his mind, a person's Judaism was to take precedence over his or her Hellenism just as a man's masculinity normally was to take precedence over his femininity. Even if the author of 2 Maccabees deemed male and female, as well as Jewish and Hellenistic traits, capable of coexisting within the same body, he expressed these ideas by using contemporary Greek terminology on sex and gender. By doing so, he reproduced the notion of women being innately inferior to men that was embedded in this terminology. Thus unfortunately, the author's formula for Judaism cannot be celebrated as truly egalitarian.

As a coda to this study, I wish finally to consider what became of the heroic women of 2 Maccabees and their Judaism. The book was reworked and adapted by the anonymous author of a text today known as 4 Maccabees, likewise composed in Greek and more overt than its source with respect to its Stoic philosophical outlook, and more emphatic in its gender-bending imagery.⁴⁸ Regrettably, however, when rabbinic scribes translated the stories into Hebrew, the linguistic subtleties of the Greek text were not preserved. Although subsequent generations of Jews remembered the mother and her seven sons, the values for which the women were believed to have died were in line with the more rigid (if sometimes uneasy) gender binarism and Jewish/non-Jewish binarism of the rabbinic sages.⁴⁹ The stories continued to be read in this way for the long duration of their reception, as models of Jewish piety under the duress of gentile persecution.⁵⁰

Ironically, the fabled "manfulness" of the victims of the Seleucid persecution acquired new meaning beyond the Jewish tradition. A number of early Christian hagiographies depicted female martyrs conducting themselves with masculine fortitude as they confronted their Roman tormentors.⁵¹ Those tragic tales impart the same lesson as 2 Maccabees, namely that one's faith should exceed one's fear of mortal punishment. Asserted, however, as a Christian virtue, the appeal to the memory of the so-called Maccabean martyrs went hand in hand with the denial of the Jews' capacity for self-sacrifice in the face of intolerance. That rhetorical emasculation of Jews in this context would be the first of many in the course of the following centuries. Not until the late nineteenth century and the momentous rebirth of Jewish nationalism under **[End Page 116]** the Zionist banner did the children of Israel reclaim the courage denied to them by the Church. In this era, the issue of gender equity in Judaism was also raised

anew by proponents of progressive religious reform who questioned the wisdom of the ancients on this matter.

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5. For comments to this effect, see Frederick W. Danker in Walter Bauer et al., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 478, s.v. "Ἰουδαῖος."
6. Mason initially articulated his rationale in idem, "Introduction to the *Judean Antiquities*," in Louis H. Feldman, trans., *Judean Antiquities 1–4*, vol. 3 of *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, ed. Steve Mason (Leiden: Brill, 2000), xiii, note 1.
7. For the following, see Steve Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 38, 4 (2007): 457–512, especially 489–510. Similar arguments include Philip F. Esler, "Judean Ethnic Identity in Josephus' *Against Apion*," in *A Wandering Galilean: Essays in Honour of Seán Freyne*, ed. Zuleika Rodgers, Margaret Daly-Denton, and Anne Fitzpatrick McKinley (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 73–77, developing his treatment in idem, *Conflict and Identity in Romans: The Social Setting of Paul's Letter* (Minneapolis: Fortress,

- 2003), 63–74; John H. Elliot, "Jesus the Israelite Was neither a 'Jew' nor a 'Christian': On Correcting Misleading Nomenclature," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 5, 2 (2007): 130–36. To my knowledge, the only scholar of classical Judaica thus far to endorse Mason's contention that neither Jews nor Judaism existed until Christians invented them is Daniel Boyarin, "Rethinking Jewish Christianity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category (to Which Is Appended a Correction of my *Border Lines*)," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 99, 1 (2009): 8–12.
8. For a more comprehensive critique along these lines, see Seth Schwartz, "How Many Judaisms Were There? A Critique of Neusner and Smith on Definition and Mason and Boyarin [End Page 117] on Categorization," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 2, 2 (2011): 221–27. Mason's most prolific critic has been D. R. Schwartz, who takes aim at the former's argument in "'Judaean' or 'Jew,'" and more thoroughly in *Judeans and Jews: Four Faces of Dichotomy in Ancient Jewish History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 3–10, and *passim*. Where S. Schwartz rejects Mason's argument without qualification, D. R. Schwartz submits that the meaning of *ioudaios* alternates between "Judean" and "Jew," depending on its context.
 9. This is, of course, a generalization, as ancient populations who identified as Greeks and Romans understood those terms to connote different aspects of practice and belief. For comments, see Jeremy McInerney, "Ethnicity: An Introduction," in *A Companion to Ethnicity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. idem (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 8–14.
 10. S. Schwartz, "How Many Judaisms," 228–30, and cf. Satlow, "Jew or Judaean," 169–72; D. R. Schwartz, "'Judaean' or 'Jew,'" 8–9; idem, *Judeans and Jews*, 99–102. D. R. Schwartz, *Judeans and Jews*, 93–99, submits that Josephus's extension of the Greek term *thrēskeia*, conventionally translated as "cult" or "worship," to his Jewish subjects suggests the historian's sense of his people's religious constitution. Compare, however, Brent Nongbri, *Before Religion: A History of a Modern Concept* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 33–38, who contends that the term's wide semantic range defies such limited application.
 11. S. Schwartz, "How Many Judaisms," 235–36. See also Benedikt Eckhardt, *Ethnos und Herrschaft: Politische Figurationen jüdischer Identität von Antiochos III. bis Herodes I.* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 4–8, and Cynthia Baker, "A 'Jew' by Any Other Name?," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 2, 2 (2011), 171–72, who weigh similar considerations against Mason's position. See further David Goodblatt, *Elements of Ancient Jewish Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), who defines nationalism as an amalgam of cultural concerns encompassing both the ethnic and the religious, especially 140–66, on what he calls the "Judah nationalism" embodied in the terminology in question.
 12. This liability is raised by Reinhartz, "Vanishing Jews," 9–10. See also Amy-Jill Levine, *The Misunderstood Jew: The Church and the Scandal of the Jewish Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSan-Francisco, 2006), 9.
 13. Except where noted, quotations from 2 Maccabees reflect the translation of Joachim Schaper, "2 Makkabees," in *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, ed. Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 503–20. I follow Schaper in utilizing the Greek edition of Rolf Hanhart, *Maccabaeorum liber II*, vol. 9.2 of *Septuaginta: Vetus Testamentum Graecum*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976).
 14. For recent overviews addressing the debated circumstances of the book's authorship, see Frank Shaw, "2 Maccabees," in *T&T Clark Companion to the Septuagint*, ed. James K. Aitken (London:

- Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 275–77; Robert Doran, *2 Maccabees: A Critical Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 14–17. Compare Daniel R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 11–15, who associates the book's main narrative with the earlier of the two letters and ascribes its content exclusively to Jason of Cyrene.
15. So, e.g., D. R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 36–37; Jan Willem van Henten, *The Maccabean Martyrs as Saviors of the Jewish People: A Study of 2 and 4 Maccabees* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 50–56. Doran, *2 Maccabees*, 1–3, is less certain about whether the letters allude to the book's main narrative, although he acknowledges the common interests of the book's three components. I reject the convoluted reading of Jonathan Goldstein, *II Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 28–83, who sees the main narrative as a first-century BCE anti-Hasmonean treatise unrelated to the letters.
 16. *2 Maccabees* 2.21. The term reappears in vv. 8.1 and 14.38. On its novel quality, see Doran, *2 Maccabees*, 67–68; D. R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 173; Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, 192.
 17. *2 Maccabees* 2.19–22. I have made a few minor orthographic emendations to Schaper's translation in idem, "2 Makkabees," 506, for the sake of stylistic coherence.
 18. Compare *2 Maccabees* 5.17–20 and 6.12–17 for more elaborate statements of the author's theological rationale for God's collective punishment of his people for the sins of the few. On the traditional, prophetic quality of this motif, see van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs*, 135–40.
 19. *2 Maccabees* 4.11–17. On the elements of the Judaism of *2 Maccabees*, see D. R. Schwartz, *Judeans and Jews*, 105–12; van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs*, 188–94. See also Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 89–93, who reads the book's Judaism as a witness to the transition of *ioudaios* from a strictly ethnic distinction to an "ethno-religious" distinction. For critical **[End Page 118]** comments on Cohen's evolutionary model echoing the foregoing critique of Mason's theory, see S. Schwartz, "How Many Judaisms," 230–32, and cf. Goodblatt, *Elements*, 20.
 20. Recent efforts to emphasize the ethnic implications of the book's "ancestral" ways ignore the author's conflation of those ways with what he calls the laws of God (*2 Maccabees* 6.1 et al.); see Kevin Lee Osterloh, "Judea, Rome, and the Hellenistic *Oikoumenē*: Emulation and the Reinvention of Communal Identity," in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, ed. Eduard Iricinschi and Holger M. Zellentin (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 106–07; Brent Nongbri, "The Motivations of the Maccabees and Judean Rhetoric of Ancestral Tradition," in *Ancient Judaism in Its Hellenistic Context*, ed. Carol Bakhos (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 108–10. For accounts of the book's ancestral rhetoric acknowledging both its ethnic and cultic compasses, see Robert Doran, "The Persecution of Judeans by Antiochus IV: The Significance of 'Ancestral Laws,'" in *The "Other" in Second Temple Judaism: Essays in Honor of John J. Collins*, ed. Daniel C. Harlow et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 423–33; Cohen, *Beginnings*, 91–92; van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs*, 188–97.
 21. For variations of this argument, see, e.g., Christian Habicht, "Hellenism and Judaism in the Age of Judas Maccabaeus," in *The Hellenistic Monarchies: Selected Papers*, trans. Peregrine Stevenson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 91–94; Édouard Will and Claude Orrieux, *Ioudaïsmos-Hellenismos: Essai sur le judaïsme judéen à l'époque hellénistique* (Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 1986), 113–75; Klaus Bringmann, *Hellenistische Reform und Religionsverfolgung in Judäa: Eine Untersuchung zur jüdisch-hellenistischen Geschichte (175–163v. Chr.)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983), 66–96; Yehoshua Amir, "The Term

- Ἰουδαϊσμός, a Study in Jewish-Hellenistic Self-Identification," *Immanuel* 14 (1982): 39–40; Jonathan Goldstein, "Jewish Acceptance and Rejection of Hellenism," in *Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period*, vol. 2 of *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*, ed. E. P. Sanders, Albert I. Baumgarten, and Alan Mendelson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 64–69; Elias J. Bickerman, *The God of the Maccabees: Studies on the Meaning and Origin of the Maccabean Revolt*, trans. Horst J. Moehring (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 83–88; Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period*, vol. 1: *Text*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 277–303; Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, trans. Shimon Applebaum (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959), 152–74, 193–203. For a recent effort to revive the conflict theory, see Sylvie Honigman, *Tales of High Priests and Taxes: The Books of the Maccabees and the Judean Rebellion against Antiochus IV* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), who reads the *hēllēnismos* of 2 Maccabees as a synecdochic code for the new Greek-style socioeconomic order imposed by Jason and its *ioudaismos* as a code for the traditional Temple-based order subsequently imposed by the Hasmoneans. Influenced by Mason, Honigman's effort to read to the book's tale of political reform and religious persecution as a revisionist spin on a grassroots social revolution fails to convince on grounds too numerous to address here. For critical comments in line with my assessment, see the review of John J. Collins in *Journal of Jewish Studies* 66, 1 (2015): 205–09.
22. See, e.g., Doran, *2 Maccabees*, 13; D. R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 51–53; John J. Collins, "Cult and Culture: The Limits of Hellenization in Judea," in *Hellenism in the Land of Israel*, ed. John J. Collins and Gregory E. Sterling (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 39–40; Erich S. Gruen, *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 3–4; Martha Himmelfarb, "Judaism and Hellenism in 2 Maccabees," *Poetics Today* 19, 1 (1998): 19–40; Lee I. Levine, *Judaism and Hellenism in Antiquity: Conflict or Confluence?* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 45; Bezalel Bar-Kochva, "Judaism and Hellenism: Between Scholarship and Journalism," *Tarbiz* 63, 3 (1994): 451–80.
23. Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism," 465–68. Mason relies on Amir, "The Term Ἰουδαϊσμός," 36–38, who infers that the author's *hēllēnismos* presupposes a verb meaning "to Hellenize" akin to other such terms for cultural imitation. For comments echoing my skepticism, see D. R. Schwartz, *Judeans and Jews*, 102–5.
24. The author does, however, acknowledge the possibility of gentiles becoming Jews, as Antiochus is said to have done on his deathbed; see 2 Maccabees 9.17, and cf. D. R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 360–61. I am not persuaded by Cohen, *Beginnings*, 92–93, who argues that the desperate king's last words are meant to denote his genuine religious conversion.
25. 2 Maccabees 4.13, with comments in Doran, *2 Maccabees*, 105–06; D. R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 224. Schaper, "2 Makkabees," 508, leaves the word untranslated, suggesting "alien ways" in footnotes here and at 2 Maccabees 6.24. **[End Page 119]**
26. For further discussion of these points, see Burns, *Christian Schism*, 92–98.
27. Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 73. I qualify my comments by noting that the patriarchal impressions left on Judaism's earliest textual memories does not necessarily cohere with the reality of the Jewish experience in antiquity. Ample evidence indicates that Jewish women played instrumental roles in the both the private and public lives of their people. For studies predicated on recovering their voices, see, e.g., Cynthia Baker, "When Jews Were Women," *History of Religions* 45, 2

- (2005): 114–34 and *Rebuilding the House of Israel: Architectures of Gender in Jewish Antiquity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Tal Ilan, *Jewish Women in Greco-Roman Palestine: An Inquiry into Image and Status* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1995); Bernadette J. Brooten, *Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogue: Inscriptional Evidence and Background Issues* (Chico: Scholars, 1982).
28. That is, the terminology rendered here as "ancestral" more accurately translates to "paternal," as it derives from the Greek *patēr*, or father. See 2 Maccabees 7.24 (honors); 2 Maccabees 6.1, 7.2 (laws); 2 Maccabees 6.6 (feasts); 2 Maccabees 7.8, 21, 27, 37, 12.37, 15.29 (language).
 29. See 2 Maccabees 6.30, 8.15 (Israelites); 2 Maccabees 8.21, 33, 13.3, 14 (country).
 30. 2 Maccabees 6.10. For comments, see Susan Haber, "Living and Dying for the Law: The Mother-martyrs of 2 Maccabees," *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 4, 1 (2006): 2–3, who highlights the women's roles as champions of Jewish survival an account of their bearing sons and performing their circumcisions.
 31. 2 Maccabees 6.9. Those customs manifestly did not include circumcision, which the Greeks deemed an act of wanton physical mutilation. See Doran, *2 Maccabees*, 149.
 32. 2 Maccabees 6.18–31. The quoted term appears in v. 27. In this case, I follow the translation of D. R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 272, with comments, 291. Schaper, "2 Makkabees," 512, renders it as "bravely," perhaps wishing to avoid the peculiar image of a man acting manfully.
 33. 2 Maccabees 7.1–41. Not named in 2 Maccabees, the woman is known as Miriam in early rabbinic traditions (*Lamentations Rabbah* 1.16; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 43), and as Hannah in medieval traditions following the Sephardic text of the Josippon, on which see David Flusser, *The Josippon (Josephus Gorionides): Edited with an Introduction, Commentary, and Notes*, vol. 1: *Text and Commentary*, rev. ed. (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1981), 70, note 1. Compare Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 57b, where she is given no name.
 34. 2 Maccabees 7.41 indicates merely that the woman died. Subsequent Jewish retellings of her story report that she was executed (*Pesiqta Rabbati* 43; Josippon) or that she committed suicide (4 Maccabees 17.1; *Lamentations Rabbah* 1.16; Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 57b).
 35. The Christian cult of the Maccabean martyrs appears to have originated in the Syrian city of Antioch, the former seat of the Seleucid crown and the implied setting of the story of the mother and her seven sons. On this development, see Raphaëlle Ziadé, *Les martyrs Maccabées: De l'histoire juive au culte chrétien, Les homélies de Gregoire de Nazianze et de Jean Chrysostome* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 39–65. Other helpful treatments include Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, *Christian Memories of the Maccabean Martyrs* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 29–77; Gerard Rouwhorst, "The Cult of the Seven Maccabean Brothers and the Mother in Christian Tradition," in *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Marcel J. H. M. Poorthuis and Joshua Schwartz (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 183–204.
 36. On the victims of the Seleucid persecution as witnesses to the Jewish faith, see, e.g., Jon D. Levenson, *The Love of God: Divine Gift, Human Gratitude, and Mutual Faithfulness in Judaism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2016), 79–83; Doran, *2 Maccabees*, 164–66; Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, *Christian Memories*, 13–17; D. R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 50; Shmuel Shephkaru, *Jewish Martyrs in the Pagan and Christian Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 19–25; van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs*, 4–9 and *passim*; Tessa Rajak, "Dying for the Law: The Martyr's Portrait in Jewish-Greek Literature," in *Portraits: Biographical Representation in the Greek and Latin Literature of the Roman Empire*, ed. M. J. Edwards and Simon Swain

- (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 43–47; Arthur J. Droge and James D. Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992), 73–75; 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. Amy-Jill Levine (Atlanta: Scholars, 1991), 68–72; Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, 282–86 and *passim*. For a dissenting opinion, see Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University [End Page 120] Press, 1999), 94–96, who maintains that the author's emphasis on the design of his subjects to defend the law of God distinguishes them from subsequent Jewish and Christian martyrs reportedly killed for their love of God.
37. On the origins of the philosophical concept, see Karen Bassi, "The Semantics of Manliness in Ancient Greece," in *Andreia: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity*, ed. Ralph M. Rosen and Ineke Sluiter (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 50–54. On *andreia* as a Stoic virtue, see Helen Cullyer, "Paradoxical *Andreia*: Socratic Echoes in Stoic 'Manly Courage,'" in Rosen and Sluiter, *ibid.*, 213–33. Recent treatments of Stoic virtue ethics encompassing *andreia* and its correlates include Matthew Sharpe, "Stoic Virtue Ethics," in *The Handbook of Virtue Ethics*, ed. Stan van Hooft (Durham: Acumen, 2014), 28–41; Malcolm Schofield, "Cardinal Virtues: A Contested Socratic Inheritance," in *Plato and the Stoics*, ed. A. G. Long (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 11–28.
38. That is, the author casts the victims of the past persecution in terms indicative of the political reality of his own time, as though they died for the cause of Jewish sovereignty realized by Hasmoneans. For comments, see Doran, *2 Maccabees*, 13–14; van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs*, 244–56, and compare D. R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 51–55, who detects a distant, Diasporan admiration for the Hasmonean state. Honigman, *Tales of High Priests*, 65–94, goes too far in construing the book's *raison d'être* as political propaganda and its account of the persecution a contrived pretext meant to justify the social revolt of Judah and his brothers.
39. See further 2 Maccabees 8.7, where Judah is praised for his "manly valor" (*euandria*), 2 Maccabees 14.18, on the "manly valor" (*andragathia*) of Judah's men, and 2 Maccabees 14.43, where a man "manfully" (*andrōdōs*) takes his own life rather than surrender to his Seleucid pursuers.
40. For the following, see Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 25–35. Laqueur's reading has been challenged for its exclusive focus on the work of the second-century CE physician Galen, whose theory Laqueur indiscriminately applies to earlier Greek thinkers. For a critique of this order, see Helen King, *The One-Sex Body on Trial: The Classical and Early Modern Evidence* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), 8–13, and further, 31–48, on the alternative two-sex understanding of the fifth/fourth-century BCE physician Hippocrates. With respect to King, I consider Laqueur's but one of multiple legitimate readings of ancient Greek sexual science, albeit one especially obliging to the language of 2 Maccabees. For a complementary assessment, see Anders Klostergaard Petersen, "Gender-Bending in Early Jewish and Christian Martyr Texts," in *Contextualising Early Christian Martyrdom*, ed. Jakob Engberg, Uffe Holmsgaard Eriksen, and Anders Klostergaard Petersen (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2011), 229–36.
41. See Maud W. Gleason, "The Semiotics of Gender: Physiognomy and Self-Fashioning in the Second Century C.E.," in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of the Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek*

World, ed. David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 390–92.

42. On *andreia* as a public virtue, see Cullyer, "Paradoxical *Andreia*," 224–31. Compare the depiction of Eleazar in 2 Maccabees 6.24–28, who resolves not to eat of the illicit sacrifice and thereby to set a good example for the Jewish youth who witness his confrontation with the Seleucid soldiers. On the didactic functions of his story and that of the mother and her sons, see van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs*, 122–24.
43. On this technique, see Meriel Jones, *Playing the Man: Performing Masculinities in the Ancient Greek Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 105–17; Jeremy McInerney, "Plutarch's Manly Women," in Rosen and Sluiter, *Andreia*, 323–27. The technique makes a rare appearance in Greco-Jewish literature in the Septuagint, where the Greek text translates the Hebrew *eshet hayil* of Proverbs 31.10 as "manly wife" (*gynaika andreia*). For comments, see Johann Cook, *The Septuagint of Proverbs: Jewish and/or Hellenistic Proverbs? Concerning the Hellenistic Colouring of LXX Proverbs* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 311. The phraseology of Proverbs likely informs the appearance of identical language in the Greek translation of the apocryphal book of Ben Sira (Sirach 28.15), on which see Teresa Ann Ellis, *Gender in the Book of Ben Sira: Divine Wisdom, Erotic Poetry, and the Garden of Eden* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 145.
44. 2 Maccabees 7.21. Note that the Greek word rendered as "courage" is not *andreia*, but a poetic synonym, *thymos*. The force of this phrase as praise for the mother's exceptional bravery is widely acknowledged. See, e.g., Lynn H. Cohick, "Mothers, Martyrs, and Manly Courage: The Female Martyr in 2 Maccabees, 4 Maccabees, and *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*," in *A Most Reliable Witness: Essays in Honor of Ross Shepard Kraemer*, ed. Susan Ashbrook Harvey et al. (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2015), 126; Doran, *2 Maccabees*, 159; Petersen, "Gender-Bending," 236–38; Haber, "Living and Dying," 5; Himmelfarb, "Judaism and Hellenism," 36–37; van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs*, 232–34; Rajak, "Dying for the Law," 55; Young, "'The Woman,'" 71; Goldstein, *II Maccabees*, 307. Compare, however, D. R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 308–09, who sees it as a backhanded compliment in view of the author's intimation that the woman's capacity for reasoning was lacking prior to her mental transformation.
45. For variations of this point, see Haber, "Living and Dying," 8–10; Gerbern S. Oegema, "Portrayals of Women in 1 and 2 Maccabees," in *Transformative Encounters: Jesus and Women Reviewed*, ed. Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 255–59.
46. For this observation, see Himmelfarb, "Judaism and Hellenism," 27–29. See also Honigman, *Tales of High Priests*, 141–45, who argues to similar effect despite insisting on cataloguing those memories under the headings of Jewish dynastic and ethnic politics rather than religion.
47. On the epistemic fluidity exhibited in the construction of Jewish identity through history, see the essays collected in Susan A. Glenn and Naomi B. Sokoloff, eds., *Boundaries of Jewish Identity* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), and Zvi Gitelman, ed., *Religion or Ethnicity? Jewish Identities in Evolution* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009).
48. On the relationship between 2 Maccabees and 4 Maccabees, see van Henten, *Maccabean Martyrs*, 70–73. The later book's gendered language is treated extensively by Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson, "Taking It like a Man: Masculinity in 4 Maccabees," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117, 2 (1998): 249–73. See also Petersen, "Gender-Bending," 240–45; van Henten, *ibid.*, 234; Young, "'The Woman,'" 73–79.

49. I use the word "translation" informally. The story of the mother of the seven sons appears in several classical rabbinic texts, although the relationship of those versions to that of 2 Maccabees is unclear. In *Lamentations Rabbah* 1.16 and Babylonian Talmud, *Gittin* 57b, her tale is set during an unspecified Roman persecution. In *Pesiqta Rabbati* 43, it is set in no specific time or place. For a comparative analysis of these stories with that of 2 Maccabees, see Robert Doran, "The Martyr: A Synoptic View of the Mother and Her Seven Sons," in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms*, ed. John J. Collins and George W. E. Nickelsburg (Chico: Scholars: 1980), 189–221, who traces the Greek and Hebrew versions to a proposed common source. Compare Gerson D. Cohen, "Hannah and Her Seven Sons in Hebrew Literature," in idem, *Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Cultures* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 40–50, who discerns direct links between the Greek and rabbinic versions. In contrast, the version of the story in the Josippon appears to draw upon a Latin version of 2 Maccabees; see Cohen, 51–54. On the unique discursive aims of the rabbinic versions, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, "The Name of the Ruse: The Toss of a Ring to Save Life and Honor," in *"Follow the Wise": Studies in Jewish History and Culture in Honor of Lee I. Levine*, ed. Zeev Weiss et al. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2010), 25–36; Simha Goldin, *The Ways of Jewish Martyrdom*, trans. Yigal Levin and ed. C. Michael Copeland (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 75–77; Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs*, 59–70; Galit Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life: Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature*, trans. Batya Stein (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 114–25.
50. The Hebrew versions of the story would go on to influence medieval Ashkenazic devotional literature, particularly following the Rhineland massacres of 1096 and the subsequent revival of interest in the classical rabbinic ethical principle of surrendering one's life to sanctify the name of God. On that development, see Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, *Christian Memories*, 121–36; Elisheva Baumgarten and Rella Kushelevsky, "From 'The Mother and Her Sons' to 'The Mother of the Sons' in Medieval Ashkenaz," *Zion* 71, 3 (2006): 273–300; Shepkaru, *Jewish Martyrs*, 177–84; Jeremy Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God: Jewish Martyrs and Jewish Memories of the First Crusade* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 106–29; Cohen, "Hannah and Her Seven Sons," 54–55.
51. On this motif, see Petersen, "Gender-Bending," 245–55; Antti Marjanen, "Male Women Martyrs: The Function of Gender-Transformation Language in Early Christian Martyrdom Accounts," in *Metamorphoses: Resurrection, Body and Transformative Practices in Early Christianity*, ed. Turid Karlsen Seim and Jorunn Økland (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 231–47; L. Stephanie Cobb, *Dying to Be Men: Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 92–123 and *passim*; Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 125–26. On the anti-Jewish rhetoric typical of early Christian martyrologies, see Cobb, 80–90. **[End Page 122]**