

## Nίκη in 1 Macc 3:19 As an Expression of the Confrontation between Israel’s Faith and Pagan Religiosity

Nίκη w 1 Mch 3,19 wyrazem konfrontacji wiary Izraela  
z religijnością pogańską

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**Abstract:** In the proposed article, the author tries to find the theological meaning of the noun νίκη, ‘victory’, present in the text of 1 Macc 3:19. In the entire book, it appears only in this verse, constituting one of its many interpretation puzzles. The analysis will go through several stages, starting with providing dictionary meanings of the term. A review of other terms used to describe the victories that the book uses will also be helpful in the inquiry. In this context, the question arises about the reason for their replacement in v. 19 by this hapax. On the other hand, a brief analysis of individual verses of the Septuagint containing νίκη will raise the question of whether the author could have been inspired by any of them using the noun in his text. Finally, it will be necessary to analyze selected works of Greek ancient literature, against which the meaning of the studied noun presence in the inspired text will become clearer.

**Keywords:** Old Testament, Septuagint, First Maccabees, Exegesis, Victory

**Abstrakt:** Obecność pojawiającego się w Pierwszej Księdze Machabejskiej tylko raz tytułowego rzeczownika greckiego musi zastanawiać w sąsiedztwie innych terminów opisujących zwycięstwa bohaterów, bardziej dostosowanych do kontekstu, w którym występują. W proponowanym artykule autor próbuje znaleźć odpowiedź na pytanie, dlaczego w 1 Mch 3,19 w mowie Judy Machabeusza hagiograf użył rzeczownika νίκη. Nie jest to jedynie zabieg literacki, lecz głębszy zamysł teologiczny autora. Analiza przejdzie kilka etapów, poczynając od podania słownikowych znaczeń omawianego terminu w celu zbadania jego rozległości semantycznej, przez przegląd innych terminów na opis zwycięstw, którymi księga operuje. Z kolei krótka prezentacja tekstów Septu-

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aginty zawierających *víκη* pozwoli odpowiedzieć na pytanie, czy którymś z nich autor mógł się inspirować, notując ów rzeczownik. Na koniec niezbędne stanie się przeanalizowanie wybranych dzieł greckiej literatury starożytnej, na tle których wyraźniej ukaże się sens obecności badanego rzeczownika w tekście natchnionym jako miejsca zderzenia wiary Izraela z religijnością pogańską doby hellenizmu.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Stary Testament, Septuaginta, Pierwsza Księga Machabejska, egzegeza, teologia biblijna

The title noun appears in the First Book of Maccabees only once, in 3:19. It would not be surprising as many books of the Old Testament contain the so-called hapax legomena, and 1 Macc itself abounds in them.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, in all other verses describing the victorious achievements of the Maccabean insurgents, the hagiographer uses other terms, more frequent and more adapted to the context in which they occur.

In this article, the author tries to find an answer to the question why in 1 Macc 3:19 the hagiographer used the noun *víκη* in the speech of Judas Maccabaeus. First of all, he writes his work belonging to a nation that professes faith in the only God, apart from whom and above whom there are no other gods (contrary to the world of pagans), and who always supports faithful believers (4:11). Although this aspect of God's help in the fight in Judas' speech to the soldiers (3:20–21) does not appear explicitly, yet the direct effect of the most important battle at Emmaus was the renewal of the temple cult out of gratitude for the support shown (4:36). Generally, the intention of the fight was to defend the traditions and customs of the homeland (3:22.46). It can also be assumed in advance that the presence of the title noun is not only a literary device aimed at enriching the vocabulary of the book, but it contains a deeper theological idea.

The analysis will go through several stages, starting with providing the dictionary meanings of the term in question in order to examine its semantic extension, allowing it to be used in the immediate context. A review of other terms appearing in the book to describe victories will also be helpful in the investigation, in order to emphasize even more the non-randomness of the use of *víκη* and ask about the reason for replacing them with this *hapax*. Conversely, a short analysis of individual places in the Septuagint containing *víκη* will allow us to answer the question whether the author could have been inspired by any of them when editing 3:19. Finally, it will be necessary to analyze selected works of Greek ancient literature, against the background of which the sense of the presence of the studied noun in the inspired text as a place of collision between the faith of Israel and the pagan religiosity of the Hellenistic era will become clearer.

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<sup>1</sup> Suffice it to say that only in chapters 3–5, studied for the purposes of the article, the inspired author included as many as 98 of them.

## I. Current research status

In the existing commentaries, articles and various types of discussions, it is in vain to seek answers to the issues posed in the introduction. In the two Polish commentaries by Feliks Gryglewicz<sup>2</sup> and Janusz Nawrot<sup>3</sup> available to the author of the article, there is no mention of this problem. The well-known and respected English commentaries by William Fairweather and John Sutherland Black,<sup>4</sup> John Robert Bartlett,<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Goldstein<sup>6</sup> and Robert Doran<sup>7</sup> also do not address this topic. Some detailed presentations of the text of 1 Macc do not discuss the subject of *νίκη*, focusing mainly on the historical threads of the described events, to which this—as a most likely fictitious text—does not belong.<sup>8</sup> Francis Borchardt devotes a few sentences to the topic of 1 Macc 3:18–19, qualifying v. 19 as part of the Grundschrift of the book's material and pointing to the theology of 'Heaven' as a force and support for the insurgents' struggle that has begun. He does not, however, consider the noun *νίκη* itself.<sup>9</sup> Yet, Stephane Berguig's comment about

<sup>2</sup> F. Gryglewicz, *Księgi Machabejskie. Wstęp — przekład z oryginału — komentarz* [in:] *Pismo Święte Starego Testamentu*, ed. S. Łach, vol. VI, part 4, Poznań 1961, p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> J. Nawrot, *Pierwsza Księga Machabejska, rozdz. 1, 1–6, 16*, (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny — Stary Testament, 14/1), Częstochowa 2016, p. 576. The lack of such a detailed exegesis in general commentaries seems to be completely understandable due to the volume of the overall material, which should be given rather synthetically, or possibly expanded in appropriate and necessary excursions.

<sup>4</sup> W. Fairweather, J. Sutherland Black, *The First Book of Maccabees: With Introduction and Notes*, Cambridge 1897, p. 92.

<sup>5</sup> J.R. Bartlett, analyzing chapter III, omits v.19, *The First and Second Books of the Maccabees*, (Cambridge Biblical Commentary), Cambridge 1973, p. 48.

<sup>6</sup> J.A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, (Anchor Bible 41), New York 1976, p. 247.

<sup>7</sup> R. Doran discussing the relevant text does not raise the problem of *νίκη*, paying attention only to the phrase 'to save by many of few', *The First Book of Maccabees* [in:] *The New Interpreter's Bible*, ed. by L.E. Keck, D.L. Petersen, vol. 4, Nashville 1996, p. 57.

<sup>8</sup> J.A. Goldstein, *The Hasmonean revolt and the Hasmonean dynasty* [in:] *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. II: *Hellenistic Age*, ed. by W.D. Davies, L. Finkelstein, Cambridge 2008, pp. 292–351, B. Bar-Kochva, *Judas Maccabaeus: The Jewish Struggle Against the Seleucids*, Cambridge 2002, pp. 157–158. These are just two of many examples of the historical approach to the content of 1 Macc.

<sup>9</sup> F. Borchardt, *The Torah in 1 Maccabees: A Literary Critical Approach to the Text*, (Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies 19), Berlin 2014, p. 244. One can also multiply works dealing more closely with lexical issues in 1 Macc, but the term of interest to us is not developed in them, e.g., I. Assan-Dhôte, J. Moatti-Fine, *Le vocabulaire de la guerre dans le premier livre des Maccabées. Étude lexicale* [in:] *La mémoire des persécutions autour des livres des Maccabées*, éd. M.-F. Baslez, O. Munnich, (Collection de la Revue des études juives 56), Actes du colloque, Paris–Leuven 2014, pp. 91–106; K. Berthelot, *The Biblical Conquest of the Promised Land and the Hasmonaean Wars according to 1 and 2 Maccabees* [in:] *The Books of the Maccabees: His-*

1 Macc 3:19 as a strong and stable faith in the intervention of Heaven on behalf of the Maccabean insurgents seems to be valuable, in the face of the opposing thesis already functioning in post-exilic Judaism that the Purim holiday marks the end of such interventions in the course of world history.<sup>10</sup>

## II. Terminological meanings of the verb family νικῶ

Of the entire group of terms that make up the family of this verb, only the noun νίκη appears in the First Book of Maccabees. In the Greek-Polish dictionary of Zofia Abramowiczówna, the following meanings were assigned to it: ‘victory’, ‘advantage’, ‘success, win’.<sup>11</sup> A much more recent work by Remigiusz Popowski gives the same references: ‘victory’, ‘win’.<sup>12</sup> Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott’s classic English dictionary translates our noun into ‘victory’, ‘mastery, ascendancy’ and ‘success’.<sup>13</sup> In turn, Franco Montanari in his dictionary notes: ‘victory’, ‘supremacy, dominion’ and ‘profit, gain’.<sup>14</sup> In the field of French language, Anatole Bailly’s most famous *Dictionnaire grec-français* gives ‘victoire’ and ‘gain d’un procès’, suggesting a rather rare legal context for this word.<sup>15</sup> Thus, all dictionaries unanimously assign the same meaning to the noun νίκη, and some indicate important areas of its occurrence. In the strict sense, they are basically both the field of sports competitions and military combat. Sometimes it can appear in the context of court cases won by one of the disputing parties. A broader analysis of the term in sentence contexts allows, however, to extend its occurrence to all interpersonal relationships in which there is a relationship of domination and submission, i.e. domination, supremacy, prevailing, privilege,

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*tory, Theology, Ideology. Papers of the Second International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, Papa, Hungary, 9–11 June, 2005*, ed. by J. Zsengellér, G.G. Xeravits, (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism), Leiden–Boston 2007, p. 51. Unfortunately, the author did not reach the works of the German, Italian or Spanish languages.

<sup>10</sup> S. Berquig, *Commentaire littéraire et historique du premier livre des Maccabées*, Paris 2019, p. 62.

<sup>11</sup> *Słownik grecko-polski*, ed. Z. Abramowiczówna, vol. III, Warszawa 1958, p. 210.

<sup>12</sup> R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu wydanie z pełną lokalizacją greckich hasel, kluczem polsko-greckim oraz indeksem form czasownikowych*, Warszawa 2006, p. 410.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.04.0057:entry=ni/kh1> [accessed: 14.8.2023].

<sup>14</sup> F. Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, Leiden 2015, p. 1401.

<sup>15</sup> *Dictionnaire grec-français*, par M.A. Bailly, rédigé avec le concours de M.E. Egger, *Nouvelle édition revue et corrigée, dite Bailly 2020, version Hugo Chávez*, sous la dir. G. Gréco, p. 1596: [https://www.academia.edu/45681853/Anatole\\_Bailly\\_Dictionnaire\\_Grec\\_Fran%C3%A7ais\\_2020\\_1894\\_?auto=download](https://www.academia.edu/45681853/Anatole_Bailly_Dictionnaire_Grec_Fran%C3%A7ais_2020_1894_?auto=download) [accessed: 14.8.2023].

hegemony, primacy, primacy or leadership.<sup>16</sup> In such cases, νίκη would appear as a specific event ensuring access to such a form of interpersonal, private or especially social relations. After this introduction to the general meaning of the term, the relationship of the discussed noun to the other words appearing in 1 Macc referring to the semantic scope of victory, success, triumph or victory should be examined. This will show its place in a family of entries with a similar meaning.

### III. Νίκη in 1 Macc 3:19 and terminology of victory in the First Book of Maccabees

The combination of both title issues results from J. Nawrot's exegesis of the main verse.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, there is no need to repeat it, although the author in his discussion only drew attention to the biblical sources of theology of 1 Macc 3:19, pointing to the story of Gideon in Judg 7:7 and David in his clash with Goliath in 1 Sam 17:45–47, as well as enumerating the heroes of Israel from the reign of David in 2 Sam 23:9–12.<sup>18</sup> In this context, it is understandable that Judas Maccabaeus believes that true power comes from God from heaven, not the number of warriors as He has power in Himself and does not need anyone's support. Quite a number of biblical sources express the same faith of the biblical authors.<sup>19</sup> However, it is necessary to add to the whole textual exegesis what is most important in the present topic. Νίκη in Judas' speech to the soldiers was used in the direct context of God's action, which gives the term a clear theological connotation. It appears in the strict context of a specific battle.

The literary form of the verse is Judas' verbal address to the soldiers, which is part of his speech immediately before the battle (3:18–22). Its essence is a personal confession of faith in the decisive power of God supporting the faithful representatives of His people in battles. Thus, we deal with a rhetoric text, a direct message addressed to a specific group of listeners, woven into an epic narrative of a historical nature.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *A Greek-English Lexicon*, ed. by H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, revised and augmented throughout by H.S. Jones with the assistance of R. McKenzie, Oxford 1940, p. 1706.

<sup>17</sup> J. Nawrot, *Pierwsza Księga...*, 2016, p. 576.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. e.g. additionally: 2 Macc 10:24–28; 2 Chron 14:10; 24:24 and Ps 32:16–17, which the author also mentioned in his comment.

<sup>19</sup> The hagiographers' belief that God has no pleasure in the number and power of man, expressed in Jdt 9:11, is worth enriching with the same theology in Pss 20:8–9; 33:16–18; 147:10; Prov 21:31; Is 31:1; Hos 7:1, and then e.g. Exod 15:6; Judg 5:31; 1 Sam 2:10; Pss 2:9; 18:13–14; 21:7–9; 68:1–2; 92:9–10; Is 45:24.

<sup>20</sup> J. Ziomek, *Retoryka opisowa*, Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1990, p. 156.

In order to emphasize the originality of the examined noun, it is worth looking at the vocabulary of the book used by the hagiographer to describe the military victories won in the fights of the insurgents with the Seleucid aggressors. There is no sporting or judicial context in it. The aim of this research is to try to answer the question whether νίκη was used by the hagiographer accidentally, perhaps for terminological enrichment of the text, or whether it has a deeper meaning in the overall message of the book.

Perhaps the most common term describing the military victories of the insurgents is σωτηρία, 'salvation, deliverance'. In 1 Macc 3:6 this noun refers to a generalizing and summarizing description of Judas Maccabaeus' victories, which will be presented in detail by the hagiographer later in the material of his work. In 4:25, this term has also the summarizing meaning, albeit this time, the great battle of Emmaus, which was victorious for the insurgents. According to 4:30, in the next battle at Beth-horon, Judas was already imploring God directly for victory, calling Him σωτήρ Ισραηλ, 'Saviour of Israel'. Conversely, in 4:56 there is also a *hapax* in the name θυσία σωτηρίου, 'saving sacrifice'. The term σωτηρίον itself is a noun meaning 'liberation, salvation, safety, rescue'. There is no doubt about its sense as an offering of thanksgiving to God for the freedom gained thanks to His intervention on behalf of the people.<sup>21</sup> The result of both victorious battles was the cleansing of the temple of the desacralizing pagan cults and the possibility of restoring it to worship in honor of the God of Israel. In 5:62 there is a conclusion to the description of the crushing actions of two lesser Jewish commanders jealous of Judas' glory, with the author's own note that they were not among those through whom σωτηρία was coming for Israel. Later in the text of the book, σωτηρία does not appear any more. This must be puzzling since both Jonathan, Judas' brother and successor as the leader of the uprising, and another brother, Simon, also had significant military successes on their account. Meanwhile, as one can guess, only Judas' struggle was combined by the hagiographer with the action of God Himself, and thus presented in the theological context of Yahweh's wars, known from the early history of Israel. These were wars ordered by God Himself and fought in His name. This is not a theme that can be discussed within the framework of the proposed topic, but it opens up another interesting field of research on the theology of the text. It is enough for now to say that σωτηρία always appears in a strictly theological context and is not limited to a military victory. In direct connection with οὐρανός, 'Heaven', which is the exact equivalent of θεός, absent in 1 Macc, the meaning of the sentence would be best explained by σωτηρία, containing the most extensive theology of saving the people by God

<sup>21</sup> Z. Abramowiczówna calls her a 'victim of peace', *Słownik grecko-polski*, vol. III, p. 270. In the biblical Hebrew text, it is the equivalent of a 'comfort offering' of a thanksgiving and joyful character, cf.: Exod 24:5; 32:6; Lev 3:1.6; 4:26.31; 7:11.29; 9:4; 17:5; 19:5; 22:21; 23:19; Num 6:17; 7:17.23.29.35.41.47.53.59.65.71.77.83.88; Deut 27:7; Josh 9:2 (LXX); 22:23; 2 Chron 30:22; 33:16.

acting through His faithful representatives. It directs to the broader theological effects of the victories achieved, which are only part of the whole process that can be initiated thanks to them. At the level of faith, it is a question of how God Himself begins to act in order to transform the given, specific victory into a broader process of freeing the people from foreign domination, ultimately leading to the strengthening of faith in His victorious presence among Israel.<sup>22</sup>

Several other victory terms are not very common in 1 Maccabees and hardly correspond to the content of Judas Maccabaeus' speech.<sup>23</sup>

Why then did the author decide not to use the term σωτηρία, which fits the context much better than νίκη? In search of the right answer, one should now look at the presence of νίκη in the Greek Bible, and consider the answer to the question whether the theology of one of its verses could not inspire the hagiographer.

#### IV. Νίκη in the Septuagint

The presented noun is not frequent and occurs basically in the late books of the Septuagint, having no influence on the 1 Macc author's possible borrowing from any of them. Meanwhile, it seems, they cannot be omitted in the current analysis, even if they were written after 1 Macc since the period proximity of some of these books creation allows to show the semantic range of the noun and its theological meaning. It turns out that νίκη appears most often precisely in connection with the action of God. The noun is used more frequently in the Second Book of Maccabees, which is closest to the time of the predecessor's creation, although the style, way of presenting facts and theological goals differ quite significantly in both books.<sup>24</sup> Four times this word is directly related to God as its complement, directly speaking about His 'victory' (10:28; 13:15; 15:8.21). In all

<sup>22</sup> A number of biblical texts underpin such a theology, including Exod 14:25.30; 33:2; Josh 3:10; Deut 7:1; Judg 6:13; 1 Sam 17:47; Ps 44:2–3; Ezek 25:25–26; 35:15; Joel 2:27; 4:17; Zech 2:12–13.

<sup>23</sup> Close in meaning to the terms described is also ἐλευθερία, 'freedom, liberation', appearing only once in a political and religious context, in 14:26. The adjective ἐλεύθερος, 'free, set free', appears more often, although always in the non-theological context of political freedom (2:11), tax exemption (10:33; 15:7) or proper name (river: 11:7; 12:13). In 14:37 there is another synonymous term, namely ἀσφάλεια, 'safety'. Of the verbs, σώζω appears most often in a theological context in 2:44.59; 3:18; 4:9.11; 9:21.46 and in the non-theological—in 9:9 and 11:48. The broader religious context manifests the verb in 10:83. The term hapax in 1 Macc, synonymous with the word σώζω, is the verb λυτρόω in 4:11, 'to deliver, to deliver'. In the text of the book, the participle λυτρούμενος appears in a typical theological context, as a definition of the victory attributed to God in the Battle of Emmaus, freeing the Jews from pagan rule.

<sup>24</sup> Probably between 124 and 63 BC. More on this by Ł. Laskowski, *Druga Księga Machabejska*, (Nowy Komentarz Biblijny — Stary Testament 14/3), Częstochowa 2017, pp. 79–93.



the mentioned texts, *νίκη* describes a strictly defined situation as the moment of a military clash between insurgent and enemy troops. There are no accompanying sentences about the consequences of a given victory, especially for the faith of the people, even though it was attributed to God's intervention from the beginning. The apocryphal 3 Macc 3:20 places *νίκη* in the context of the supposed decree of Ptolemy IV Philopator, king of Egypt against the Jews, ordering their imprisonment (3:11–30).<sup>25</sup> In v. 20, *νίκης* appears in a military and political sense, as a memory of the pharaoh's victory at Raphia against Antiochus III the Great. Also in this text, *νίκη* does not go beyond the strict military context without mentioning the possible later effects of the battle for both rulers and their states. An exception is the praise of Eleazar in 4 Macc 7:1–15, who was martyred for his faithfulness to God's ban on eating pork,<sup>26</sup> which also includes the term discussed. In truly pathetic words, the author shows the unwavering fidelity of the priest, concluding that 'he entered the port of immortal victory (*νίκης*)'. The religious context of the use of the noun is beyond doubt.

From the Septuagint's writings earlier than 1 Macc, to which the hagiographer could refer, there are still three, including two canonical ones. The verse Proverbs 22.9A (LXX) is part of the Greek version, probably written around 170 BC.<sup>27</sup> The wisdom saying is that whoever gives to others ensures *νίκη* and respect. Although it is difficult to say what exactly the author means, one can understand the meaning of *νίκη* with the help of the second part of the statement, as gaining the favour of the heart of those whom he has won by this deed. However, there is no military or religious connotation here, although such a gift can always be motivated by faith.<sup>28</sup> The translation of the First Book of Chronicles,<sup>29</sup> also containing *νίκη* in the great doxology delivered in honour of God by David before starting the construction of the temple in Jerusalem, is attributed to the much earlier period of the 4<sup>th</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC (29:11). Along with such attributes as greatness, power, glory, there is also 'victory'.<sup>30</sup> However, exegetes rightly note that this meaning does not correspond well to the context of praising God, hence the Hebrew term *כְּבוֹד* is translated as 'splendour, majesty, magnificence' and not 'victory', as interpreted by the Greek

<sup>25</sup> M. Wojciechowski, *Apokryfy z Biblii greckiej*, (Rozprawy i Studia Biblijne 8), Warszawa 2001, p. 30.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 104.

<sup>27</sup> *La Bible d'Alexandrie: Les Proverbes. Traduction du texte grec de la Septante, introduction et notes*, vol. 17, tr. D.-M. D'Hamonville, Paris 2000, pp. 22–24. At the same time, the author of the translation gives the conclusions of other researchers who define the time of translation of the work into Greek in different ways.

<sup>28</sup> Among others, Prov 11:25; 19:17; 21:13; Job 31:16–20; Pss 41:1–3; 112:9; Isa 32:8; 58:7.

<sup>29</sup> *Septuaginta*, tłum. R. Popowski, Warszawa 2013, p. 528.

<sup>30</sup> R. Popowski translates *νίκη* as 'dominating', probably recognizing the difficulty in translating the word in a classical way, *ibidem*, p. 563.



translator of the book.<sup>31</sup> However, it remained faithful to the basic meaning of the noun, perhaps leaving readers free to decipher it. Conversely, the religious, even cultic context of using the term is quite clear.<sup>32</sup>

The last of the discussed verses can be considered one of those that the spirited author could possibly be inspired by when presenting *νίκη* in the immediate vicinity of God's action, taking into account that this term in 1 Chron 29:11 appeared in the company of the highest divine attributes. As mentioned above, Judas Maccabaeus was convinced that true power comes from God from heaven, not the number of warriors since He has power in Himself and does not need anyone's support. This belief could be the basis for recognizing the text of 1 Chronicles as a possible *fons theologicus* 1 Macc 3:19, although the author of 1 Macc refers to a much broader theology of the wars of representatives of the chosen nation as the wars of Yahweh, combining the theme of His decisive role in the fight (also military) for Israel with their victories.<sup>33</sup> This military area, however, is missing from the text of 1 Chronicles. Conversely, Prov 22:9A (LXX), does not contain a fight motif at all and does not connect *νίκη* with God's action.

The above analysis indicates that when using *νίκη* in verse 1 Macc 3:19, the author was rather not inspired by a specific, older Old Testament text. However, it was in full agreement with the entirety of the theology of the Old Testament regarding the holy wars of Yahweh waged on behalf of His people. Nevertheless, most likely his intention goes deeper into the extra-biblical literature of ancient Greece, in which *νίκη* occurs extremely often. The following analysis will try to answer the interesting question of whether the hagiographer wants to oppose the influence of the pagan religion of the Seleuki Empire, with which the insurgents were at war. However, it should be emphasized that there can be no particular literary relationship between the quoted texts and the main verse of this article. It is more about an attempt to show the religious milieu against which the originality of Judas Maccabaeus' faith will be more strongly highlighted.

## V. Ancient Hellenistic Literature

In point III of this discussion, we have marked the literary form of the verse, which is a lyrical text intertwined with an epic narrative of a historical nature.

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. remarks by S. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles: A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library, Louisville–London 1993, p. 509.

<sup>32</sup> As in the Hebrew version נִצְחָה, 'strength, victory, eternity'.

<sup>33</sup> A classic scholarly position is the work of G. von Rad, *Holy War in Ancient Israel*, Grand Rapids 1958, *passim*; cf. also T.B. Dozeman, *God at War: A Study of Power in the Exodus Tradition*, New York–Oxford 1996, pp. 15–100; W.C. Kaiser, Jr., *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, Grand Rapids 1983, pp. 172–180.

Judas' message to the soldiers is part of his pre-battle speech (3:18–22). Formulating his statement, he confesses his personal faith in the decisive power of God supporting his faithful representatives of his people in battles. The above remark is now extremely important in order to narrow down the search for possible extra-biblical textual equivalents in ancient Hellenistic literature due to over 13,000 verses in which words belonging to the verb family νικάω occur.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, we will basically limit the search to lyrical texts, strictly speaking, statements, confessions, declarations, announcements or utterances, the subject of which may be faith in a military context. It seems that this genre of texts stands closest to 1 Macc 3:19. Although in the works of some historians of antiquity νίκη will appear most often as a simple and direct announcement of the fact of victory in this or that battle, their remarks will also become very helpful in the subject under discussion.<sup>35</sup> The following study will only be representative and not comprehensive due to the multitude of material. The author is aware that the conclusions drawn from this may contain some admixture of incompleteness or deficiency. Although it is extremely difficult to examine the entire literary legacy of ancient Hellas on this issue, it seems possible to identify two main types of statements linking the military and religious context of νίκη. On the one hand, these are notes that minimize the role of the deities in the fights, and on the other hand, presenting them in a decisive role.

## 1. The military-religious milieu of the noun νίκη

### a) a minimalist understanding of the role of deities in combat

One of the many valuable examples of Greek battle accounts of this type is Xenophon's story from *Cyropaedia* about the approaching battle of Cyaxares, the king of Media, in alliance with Cyrus II the Great, the ruler of Persia, against Croesus, the king of Lydia, who was invading both countries in order to the alleged release of King Astyages, Croesus' hitherto ally on the Median throne.<sup>36</sup> Called for help, Cyrus has just crossed the borders of Media, wanting to join the allied forces. Xenophon notices the religiosity of the young leader and his father who, seeing the eagle soaring in the sky, 'prayed to the gods and heroes who

<sup>34</sup> Based on [http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/searchresults?target=greek&collections=Perseus%3Acollec-tion%3AGreco-Roman&allwords=ni%2Fkh&allwordsexpand=on&phrase=&any-words=&exclude\\_words=&search=Search](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/searchresults?target=greek&collections=Perseus%3Acollec-tion%3AGreco-Roman&allwords=ni%2Fkh&allwordsexpand=on&phrase=&any-words=&exclude_words=&search=Search) [accessed: 14.8.2023].

<sup>35</sup> Among them there are historians who lived much later than the times of the creation of 1 Macc, but this period is not long enough for the semantic scope of νίκη to change dramatically. Hence, they can also be included in the study of the noun.

<sup>36</sup> P.L. Bernstein, *The Power of Gold: The History of an Obsession*, Hoboken 2012, pp. 35–36.

watched over the Persian land and again prayed to the protective gods of the Medes' when they entered the territory of the allied kingdom (2.1.1). This short mention emphasizes the strong religious awareness of the then rulers who entrusted their fate to various deities, especially in the face of the approaching clash with enemy troops. However, what brings the whole second chapter of Xenophon's story closer to 1 Macc 3:19 is the fact that the conversation between Cyaxares and Cyrus concerns the number of his own soldiers in the face of the Lydians' forces outnumbering four times (2.1.2–7). Then Cyaxares says: "In that case, then, the victory (νίκη) will be with the side that has the greater numbers; for the few would be wounded and killed off by the many sooner than the many by the few."<sup>37</sup>

It is difficult to judge the strength of the faith of ancient rulers against the dangers of combat on the basis of a single verse and the account of an outsider, such as a Greek historian. However, the logical thinking of the Median strategist completely clashes with the strength of Judas' faith, showing the value of faith in God's help in dramatic situations for the combatants. At the level of human calculation, Cyaxares is obviously right in prophesying victory to those who are more numerous. But—as the case of Judas' shows—it is the power of personal faith in God's miraculous intervention that can effectively thwart the plans of enemies. The further part of the dialogue between Cyrus and Cyaxares concerns only the way of fighting, the type of weaponry, teaching combat tactics and encouraging the soldiers to fight bravely, and the possible turning to the gods does not take place (2.1.9–30).

The gods have even less to say in Demosthenes's third speech against Philip of Macedon in 349, when he rants about defeat in one of the battles lost by the Greeks. In section 17 of the third Olynthiac speech, the speaker states:

But, in the name of the gods, when we have abandoned all these places and almost helped Philip to gain them, shall we then ask who is to blame? For I am sure we shall never admit that it is ourselves. In the panic of battle the runaway never blames himself; it is always his general's fault, or his comrades', anyone's rather than his own. Yet surely to the runaways collectively the defeat is due; for he might have stood firm (ἐνίκον).<sup>38</sup>

The author does not seem to attribute any significant role to the gods in the ongoing battles, limiting their course to these or other situations occurring on the battlefield. An example of one of them is a defeat ending in the escape of the beaten, additionally accused of cowardice and trying to shift the blame onto

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<sup>37</sup> Xenophon, *Cyropaedia*, vol. I, Books 1–4, tr. W. Miller, (Loeb Classical Library 51), Cambridge, MA 1914, pp. 138–139.

<sup>38</sup> Demosthenes, *Olynthiacs, Philippics, Minor Public Orations 1–17 and 20*, tr. J.H. Vince, (Loeb Classical Library 238), Cambridge, MA 1930), pp. 51–53.

someone else, just to justify themselves or others. During the speech, one can notice the author's concentration solely on the human determinants of failure, without the participation of the gods, who seemed to be watching the unfolding events from a distance. The awareness of their existence is noticeable in the speech's reference to their presence (ἀλλὰ πρὸς θεῶν, 'in the name of the gods!'), but the speaker goes on to ridicule the oversighted orators' bid for patriotism in pompous apostrophes to the gods (N<sup>o</sup> 18). Thus, even a rather disrespectful approach of some to their expected role in the ongoing battles is visible.

Another example of this type may be the relatively close in content to 1 Macc 3:19 report by Appian of Alexandria on the results of the great battle of Magnesia in 190 BC between the Roman Republic and Antiochus III the Great, the ruler of the Seleucian empire. The Greek historiographer in his *Roman History* XI, 37 commented on this event as follows:

After this very brilliant victory, one that seemed improbable (παραλόγως) to some people for they thought it unlikely (εἰκὸς ἐνόμιζον) that a small army operating abroad should so thoroughly get the better of a much larger one.<sup>39</sup>

The author then cites all the mistakes of the battle strategy committed by the Seleut chief, which his commanders and allies enumerated to him. In turn, presenting the attitude of the Romans, the historian writes:

At Rome, on the other hand, confidence was high. They thought that with the help of the gods and by virtue of their own courage (ὑπὸ τε ἀρετῆς καὶ θεῶν ἐπικουρίας), nothing was difficult for them anymore. For, understandably, their reputation for good fortune (δὴ καὶ ἐς δόξαν εὐτυχίας ἔφερον) was bolstered by the triumph on a single day of their small army against a large one, in the first battle of their first offensive, won on foreign soil against so many peoples, against the king's armament, with his brave mercenaries and renowned Macedonians, and against the king himself, possessed of a huge kingdom and the title "the Great."<sup>40</sup>

Some of Appian's significant remarks allow us to draw conclusions about the common belief that the larger army as a rule prevails over the weaker army. This means that the gods were not directly involved in the fight of people, contenting themselves with the statement about their possible looking at the ongoing fight from afar and not interfering in its course. This is probably where the phrases παραλόγως and εἰκὸς ἐνόμιζον in the historian's text come from. This position seems to be confirmed by the quarrel between the king and his advisers and gen-

<sup>39</sup> Appian of Alexandria, *Roman History, Volume III*, ed. and tr. B. McGing, (Loeb Classical Library 4), Cambridge, MA 2019, pp. 76–77.

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, pp. 78–79.

erals, who pointed out his errors in directing the fight without the slightest attention to the lack of fortune or the help of the deities. It is as if only strategy and human genius mattered, not some godly input. In the description of the attitude of the Romans, Appian expresses their belief in the connection between human bravery and gods providing unspecified help to their chosen ones, but it seems to be a rather vague and courtesy reference than a presentation of the actual strength of the faith of the fighting soldiers. The note on the Romans' belief in luck rather shows counting much more on their own forces before the battle than on the blessing of fate that favours them.

### **b) a maximalist understanding of the participation of deities in combat**

A specific opposite of the predecessors is the clear declaration of the hero's faith in the helping hand of gods in the fight, which is given by Aeschylus in his work *Seven Against Thebes*. Here in the speech of Eteocles, the ruler of Thebes (510–520), the Greek tragedian included the following record:

And Hermes has brought them together appropriately: the man is an enemy of the man he will face, and on their shields they will bring together two antagonistic gods. One of them has the fire-breathing Typhon, and on Hyperbius' shield resides Father Zeus, standing with his flaming bolt in his hand.<sup>41</sup> Such are their alliances with gods; and we are on the side of the winners, they of the losers, that is if Zeus is Typhon's superior in battle. It is to be expected that the human opponents will fare likewise, and by the logic of Hyperbius' emblem the Zeus he has on his shield should become his Saviour.

In defense of Thebes and the reign of Eteocles against the advancing seven warlords fighting on the side of his brother, Polynices, stood Hyperbius, son of Oenops, appointed by Eteocles to defend the Oncaid Gate against Hippomedon, one of the seven supporters of the throne for the king's brother. Hyperbius had the image of Zeus on his shield, which he believed would aid him in battle, not against a human enemy, but against his fire-breathing god Typhon. Victory in combat was reserved for the one whom the defending god defeated in his own combat against the adversary.<sup>42</sup> Thus, the effect of the struggle between people

<sup>41</sup> The greek text version available omits verse 514, the most important for us: κοῦπω τις εἶδε Ζῆνά που νικώμενον, "no one has seen a defeated (νικώμενον) Zeus anywhere yet". Other critical editions include it, cf. Aeschylus, *Persians. Seven against Thebes. Suppliants. Prometheus Bound*, ed. and tr. by A.H. Sommerstein, (Loeb Classical Library 145), Cambridge, MA 2009, pp. 204–205.

<sup>42</sup> Typhon in Greek mythology is a terrible half-man, half-animal, height and strength surpassing everyone. He lost the fight with Zeus and as a result he was thrown to Tartarus, R. Graves, *Mity greckie*, Warszawa 1992, pp. 126–128.

will be revealed only after the end of the struggle between the gods, becoming in turn a visible sign of the victory of one of them. A clear similarity to the faith of Judas Maccabaeus is revealed first in the belief in the effectiveness of human effort dependent on divine help, then also in the belief in the invincibility of the ruler of the Greek pantheon of gods, as invincible is the God of Israel. Conversely, the motive of a fight between Yahweh and any deity is completely excluded. He does not have to fight an equal because he is the only one. Conversely, He can completely help the one who obeys Him and fights for a just cause. In this light, 1 Macc 3:19 directs its content at pagan beliefs.

The second example is longer since it is much richer in a maximalist belief in the decisive role of deities in human struggles. An interesting record by Plutarch of Chaeronea about the military campaigns of Marcus Furius Camillus, a great Roman commander and six-time tribune, who was even given the power of a dictator, concerns the victory and capture in 396 BC of the Etruscan city of Veii after 10 years of struggle. In his work *Camillus* 5:1–7 Plutarch, describing the preparations for the decisive battle, pays close attention to the religiosity of the tribune and his army. After Camillus was appointed dictator by the senate of the republic, he chose Publius Cornelius Scipio as the leader of his cavalry and

in the first place he made solemn vows to the gods that, in case the war had a glorious ending, he would celebrate the great games in their honour, and dedicate a temple to a goddess whom the Romans call Mater Matuta (5:1).

There is now a description of the rituals accompanying temple piety, and after making the vows, Camillus “invaded the country of the Faliscans and conquered them in a great battle, together with the Capenates who came up to their aid” (5:2). Then he turned against Veii, one of the twelve most important cities of Etruria at that time, and by deceit wished to seize the heavily fortified city by means of a tunnel calculated in such a way that its exit would fall on the very market of the city, where the temple of Juno, most revered by the Etruscans, was located. When the excavations to the temple were unnoticed, the Etruscan chief made a sacrifice in honor of the goddess. Probably the arrangement of her bowels caused the visionary to shout that victory would be given by god (ὄτι νίκην ὁ θεὸς δίδωσι) to the one who finished the sacrifice. Hearing this, the Romans from the excavation broke into the temple, which the first sacrificers left in panic. The sacrifice was brought to Camillus, who finished it, although Plutarch himself expresses his considerable doubts as to the veracity of the whole story (5:3–4).

The following description is worth quoting in full:

At any rate the city was taken by storm, and the Romans were pillaging and plundering its boundless wealth, when Camillus, seeing from the citadel what was going on, at first burst into tears as he stood, and then, on being congratulated by the by-

standers, lifted up his hands to the gods (ἀνέσχε τὰς χεῖρας τοῖς θεοῖς) and prayed, saying: “O greatest Zeus,<sup>43</sup> and ye gods who see and judge men’s good and evil deeds, ye surely know that it is not unjustly, but of necessity and in self-defence that we Romans have visited its iniquity upon this city of hostile and lawless men. But if, as counterpoise to this our present success, some retribution is due to come upon us, spare, I beseech you, the city and the army of the Romans, and let it fall upon my own head, though with as little harm as may be.” With these words, as the Romans’ custom is after prayer and adoration, he wheeled himself about to the right, but stumbled and fell as he turned. The bystanders were confounded, but he picked himself up again from his fall and said: “My prayer is granted! a slight fall is my atonement for the greatest good fortune” (5.5–7). After he had utterly sacked the city, he determined to transfer the image of Juno to Rome, in accordance with his vows. The workmen were assembled for the purpose, and Camillus was sacrificing and praying the goddess to accept of their zeal and to be a kindly co-dweller with the gods of Rome, when the image, they say, spoke in low tones and said she was ready and willing. But Livy says that Camillus did indeed lay his hand upon the goddess and pray and beseech her, but that it was certain of the bystanders who gave answer that she was ready and willing and eager to go along with him (6,1–2).<sup>44</sup>

In addition to the undoubtedly clever strategy of action and the heroism of the soldiers, there is an extremely strong motif of faith in the providence of the gods who favour the attackers. First, the pledge made before the fight, followed by the official prayers of thanks for the victory. The special content of the supplications is noteworthy, showing humble submission to their judgment and readiness to take upon oneself the possible negative effects of the attack resulting from the possible wrath of the goddess. It is motivated by the probable destruction of the temple of Hera (Juno), the main guardian of the conquered city. Hence the decision to move her statue to Rome to give her a proper place among the pantheon of the republic capital guardians. The personal, deep faith of the tribune, even connoting superstition, is beyond doubt.

## 2. Rejection of human sacrifice in exchange for victory

Judas’ faith has a clear anti-pagan connotation in the context of the motif of demanding a sacrifice in exchange for the gods’ assurance of victory, known in Greek mythology. Four of the numerous examples of texts that speak of child or youth sacrifices requested by or with the support of the deities will be presented

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<sup>43</sup> The original record has been preserved, although in translations the name of the god Jupiter appears here, in accordance with the Roman nomenclature.

<sup>44</sup> Plutarch, *Lives*, Vol. II: *Themistocles and Camillus. Aristides and Cato Major. Cimon and Lucullus*, tr. by B. Perrin, (Loeb Classical Library 47), Cambridge, MA 1914, pp. 106–109.



below. They create two different types of texts. The first type of stories emphasizes the very necessity of making a sacrifice, while the second one emphasizes the voluntary acceptance of such atonement.

One of the more well-known motifs of this type is also the murder of Androgeus, the son of Minos, king of Crete, allegedly by the Athenians during the sports games. Diodorus Siculus' account gives some details here. Now this Androgeus came to Athens during the Panathenaic festival, in the reign of Aegeus, king of Athens, and, defeating all the participants in the games, became a close friend of the sons of Pallas. Aegeus looked suspiciously at the friendship they made with Androgeus as he feared that Minos might help the sons of Pallas and take away his supreme power. Therefore, he conspired against Androgeus' life. As a result, when he was going to Thebes to attend a festival there, Aegeus caused him to be deceitfully killed by some natives of the region near Oinoi in Attica. Further as follows:

Minos, when he learned of the fate which had befallen his son, came to Athens and demanded satisfaction for the murder of Androgeos. And when no one paid any attention to him, he declared war against the Athenians and uttered imprecations to Zeus, calling down drought and famine throughout the state of the Athenians. And when drought quickly prevailed about Attica and Greece and the crops were destroyed, the heads of the communities gathered together and inquired of the god what steps they could take to rid themselves of their present evils. The god made answer to them that they should go to Aeacus, the son of Zeus and Aeginê, the daughter of Asopus, and ask him to offer up prayers on their behalf. And when they had done as they had been commanded, Aeacus finished offering the prayers and thereupon, among the rest of the Greeks, the drought was broken, but among the Athenians alone it continued; wherefore the Athenians were compelled to make inquiry of the god how they might be rid of their present evils. Thereupon the god made answer that they could do so if they would render to Minos such satisfaction for the murder of Androgeos as he might demand. The Athenians obeyed the order of the god, and Minos commanded them that they should give seven youths and as many maidens every nine years to the Minotaur for him to devour, for as long a time as the monster should live (διδόναι κόρους ἑπτὰ καὶ τὰς ἴσας κόρας δι' ἐτῶν ἑννέα βορὰν τῷ Μινωταύρῳ ὅσον ἂν χρόνον ζῆ τὸ τέρας). And when the Athenians gave them, the inhabitants of Attica were rid of their evils and Minos ceased warring on Athens (δόντων δ' αὐτῶν, ἀπηλλάγησαν τῶν κακῶν οἱ κατὰ τὴν Ἀττικὴν, καὶ ὁ Μίνως πολέμων ἐπαύσατο τὰς Ἀθήνας). At the expiration of nine years Minos came again to Attica accompanied by a great fleet and demanded and received the fourteen young people.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, Vol. III, Books 4.59–8, tr. by C.H. Oldfather, (Loeb Classical Library 340), Cambridge, MA 1939, pp. 8–11.

Although the myth mentions human demands, not divine ones, as to the necessity of sacrificing young people, but all this is done with the approval of the gods, who not only do not oppose the demands of the ruler of Crete, but cooperate with him in punishing the culprits. The one who takes revenge is a mythical creature with the body of a man with the head of a bull.

Plutarch, in describing the life and deeds of Themistocles, an Athenian politician and strategist who lived at the turn of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, the creator of Athens' naval power, also mentions the fact that he sacrificed three captured Persian youths to the god Dionysus in exchange for victory.

Themistocles was sacrificing alongside the admiral's trireme. There three prisoners of war were brought to him, of visage most beautiful to behold, conspicuously adorned with raiment and with gold. They were said to be the sons of Sandaucé, the King's sister, and Artayctus. When Euphrantides the seer caught sight of them, since at one and the same moment a great and glaring flame shot up from the sacrificial victims and a sneeze gave forth its good omen on the right, he clasped Themistocles by the hand and bade him consecrate the youths, and sacrifice them all (τῶν νεανίσκων κατάρξασθαι καὶ καθιερεῦσαι πάντα) to Dionysus Carnivorous, with prayers of supplication; for on this wise would the Hellenes have a saving victory (οὕτω γὰρ ἅμα σωτηρίαν τε καὶ νίκην ἔσεσθαι τοῖς Ἕλλησιν). Themistocles was terrified, feeling that the word of the seer was monstrous and shocking; but the multitude, who, as is wont to be the case in great struggles and severe crises, looked for safety rather from unreasonable than from reasonable measures, invoked the god with one voice, dragged the prisoners to the altar, and compelled the fulfilment of the sacrifice (τὴν θυσίαν συντελεσθῆναι), as the seer commanded.<sup>46</sup>

As we can see, the text refers to the sacrificing of the captured sons of the sister of the reigning ruler of the enemy army, specifically the Persian ones, before the Battle of Salamis in 480 BC.<sup>47</sup> The comment of the writer himself, who strongly doubts the effectiveness of this type of practice and almost mocks the fear of people turning in such situations to divination, spells and magical assessment of reality, seems to be valuable.

In turn, one of the most famous examples of voluntary acceptance of satisfaction is the attitude of Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, who was to be sacrificed by her father to the angry goddess Artemis in Aulis, in Boeotia, in order to appease her. In return, she will agree to create a wind that will allow to go to Troy:

<sup>46</sup> Plutarch, 38–41.

<sup>47</sup> A. Ziolkowski, *Historia powszechna. Starożytność*, Warszawa 2011, p. 435.

Hellas in all its might now looks to me, and upon me depends the power (καθθανεῖν μὲν μοι δέδοκται: τοῦτο δ' αὐτὸ βούλομαι) to take their ships over and destroy the Phrygians, so that the barbarians will not do anything to women in the future [and not allow them to abduct women from rich Hellas, since they have paid for the loss of Helen, whom Paris abducted]. All this rescuing is accomplished by my death (ταῦτα πάντα καθθανοῦσα ῥύσομαι), and the fame I win for freeing Hellas will make me blessed (καί μου κλέος Ἑλλάδ' ὡς ἠλευθέρωσα). Truly it is not right that I should be too in love with my life: you bore me for all the Greeks in common, not for yourself alone. Countless hoplites and countless rowers will dare, since their country has been wronged, to fight bravely against the enemy and die on behalf of Hellas (καί μου κλέος Ἑλλάδ' ὡς ἠλευθέρωσα): shall my single life stand in the way of all this? What just plea can we make to counter this argument?<sup>48</sup>

Fortunately for the sacrificed girl, the goddess resigned from her, giving the king a doe, and made his daughter a priestess from Tauris.<sup>49</sup>

Among other examples, the myth of Macaria, recorded by Pausanias, can also be noted:

The story says that an oracle was given the Athenians that one of the children of Heracles must die a voluntary death (τῶν παιδῶν ἀποθανεῖν χρῆναι τῶν Ἡρακλέους τινὰ ἐθελοντήν), or (ἐπεὶ ἄλλως) else victory could not be theirs. Thereupon Macaria, daughter of Deïaneira and Heracles, slew herself and gave to the Athenians victory in the war (ἀποσφάζασα ἑαυτὴν ἔδωκεν Ἀθηναίοις τε κρατῆσαι τῷ πολέμῳ) and to the spring her own name.<sup>50</sup>

The Greek historian recalled this legend by explaining the existence of a spring in Marathon called Μακαρία, to which the following legend was attached:

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<sup>48</sup> Euripides, *Bacchae. Iphigenia at Aulis. Rhesus*, ed. and tr. by D. Kovacs, (Loeb Classical Library 495), Cambridge, MA 2003, pp. 316–317.

<sup>49</sup> There is a significant convergence of the myth with the text of Gen 22:1–13, which relates the sacrifice that Abraham was to make of Isaac at God's request. The same theme of sacrificing one's own child recurs, the deity's decision not to kill him in the requested sacrifice, and to make a substitute sacrifice. The fundamental difference, however, is that God put Abraham to the test, not a relentless demand which he would then withdraw. Nor was this demand motivated by the revocation of anger and hindrance in exchange for a sacrifice, as in the case of Artemis. In addition, God did not come with a substitute victim, which Abraham himself found nearby and did not take his child for any function in his service, like Iphigenia becoming a priestess of the goddess. Therefore, one cannot talk about any literary and ideological dependence of the two texts on each other. Generally speaking, contacts between ancient Greek mythology and the faith of Israel were minimal at that time.

<sup>50</sup> Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Vol. I, Books 1–2 (*Attica and Corinth*), tr. by W.H.S. Jones, (Loeb Classical Library 93), Cambridge, MA 1918, pp. 176–177.

ched: When Heracles left Tiryns, fleeing from Eurystheus, Heracles' cousin, he went to live with his friend Keucus, king of Trachis. After Heracles was transferred to the world of the gods, Eurystheus demanded his children. Keuk, unable to oppose the power of the ruler of Mycenae, sent them to Athens to help Theseus. The arrival of the children in the city sparked a war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians for the first time, as Theseus refused to hand over the refugees at Eurystheus's request. The victory in the war of both countries on the side of Athens was paid for by Macaria with her life.<sup>51</sup>

A similar, voluntary sacrifice of life is also recorded in the myth of Menippe and Metioche. During the plague ravaging Boeotia, two virgins voluntarily gave their lives to Persephone in order to end the disease.<sup>52</sup> Several other similar stories can be found in the literature of ancient Greece.<sup>53</sup>

Although Judas' speech does not explicitly emphasize this motif in Greek mythology, the hero professes faith in God, who supports him completely free of charge, without any demands for sacrifices from people. This practice, known especially from the time of the wicked king Manasseh, was strictly forbidden in the Israelite religion and especially strongly condemned by the prophets and in the biblical deuteronomistic tradition.<sup>54</sup> Literally everything God does for his people, He does it completely unconditionally, out of pure love and His own obligations to Abraham and the patriarchs, needing nothing in return but the people's trust and obedience.<sup>55</sup> The whole of God's activity for Israel is treated as an expression of His graciousness in all its manifestations: creation, the history of primitive humanity, promises given to the patriarchs, the Exodus from Egypt, the

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<sup>51</sup> This theme was also included by Euripides, *Herakles* 484–496 and Apollodor, *Bibliotheka* 2.8; A. Henrichs, *Human sacrifice in Greek religion: Three case studies* [in:] *Greek Myth and Religion*, ed. by H. Yunis, Berlin 2019, pp. 37–68.

<sup>52</sup> Antoninus Liberalis, *Μεταμορφώσεων συναγωγή* 25; Ovidius, *Metamorphoseon libri* 13. 687.

<sup>53</sup> J.S. Rundin, *Pozo Moro, Child Sacrifice, and the Greek Legendary Tradition*, "Journal of Biblical Literature" 123 (2004) 3, pp. 425–447. Some other examples gives also, J.M. Bremmer, *Sacrificing a Child in Ancient Greece: The Case of Iphigeneia* [in:] *The Sacrifice of Isaac: The Aqedah (Genesis 22) and Its Interpretations*, ed. by E. Noort, E.J.C. Tigchelaar, (Themes in Biblical Narrative 4), Leiden 2002, pp. 27–29.

<sup>54</sup> 2 Kings 16:3; 17:17; 21:6; Jr 7:31; 32:35; Ezek 16:21; 20:26.31; 23:37–39. A strict prohibition appears in Lev 18:21; 20:2–5 and Deut 12:30–31; 18:10; J.A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament, Grand Rapids 1980, p. 294. More on that J. Day, *Molech: A God of Human Sacrifice in the Old Testament*, Cambridge 1989, *passim*; D. Markl, *Polemics against Child Sacrifice in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History* [in:] *Intolerance, Polemics, and Debate in Antiquity Politico-Cultural, Philosophical, and Religious Forms of Critical Conversation*, ed. by G.H. van Kooten, J. van Ruiten (Themes in Biblical Narrative 25), Leiden 2019, pp. 57–91.

<sup>55</sup> Deut 4:37; 7:7–9; 10:15; 33:3; Ps 103:17; Is 45:17; 54:8–9; Jr 31:3; Hos 11:1.4; Mal 1:2.

Sinai covenant, the conditions of the people's stay in the promised land, the stages of Israel's history, the struggle to keep the faith, behavior of the people during the Babylonian captivity.<sup>56</sup> Judas and the insurgents are undoubtedly aware of this, strengthened especially by the content of Mattathias' last speech before his death, referring to the entire history of the chosen nation. A strong emphasis is placed on God's faithfulness, with whom those who hope in Him will not be disappointed (1 Macc 2:61).

### 3. Rejection of the personification of victory in the goddess Nike

The last point of this analysis leads to the rejection of Nike as the personification of victory. It should come as no surprise that the victory in battle desired by the Greeks moved over time to the level of belief in the existence of a goddess who embodied them, as one of the Orphic hymns in her honor shows:

O Powerful Victory (Νίκη), by men desired, with adverse breasts to dreadful fury fired,  
Thee I invoke, whose might alone can quell contending rage, and molestation fell:  
'Tis thine in battle to confer the crown, the victor's prize, the mark of sweet renown;  
For thou rul'st all things, Victory (Νίκη) divine! And glorious strife, and joyful shouts are thine.  
Come, mighty Goddess, and thy suppliant bless, with sparkling eye, elated with success;  
May deeds illustrious thy protection claim, and find, led on by thee immortal Fame.<sup>57</sup>

The hymn celebrates the power and invincibility of the goddess cooperating with the combatants in their battles. It is worth noting, however, that the anthem does not distinguish between a dignified, just, or defensive battle, and an invading, violent, or deadly war. The goddess does not care about the rightness of the fights, but only takes the side of the stronger. She guarantees her victories to them, rewarding the effort itself, not the goal for which the fight is conducted. To this conclusion leads the interpretation of the record ἐν πολέμοις κρίνουσα τροπαιούχοισιν ἐπ' ἔργοις, 'in battles decisive [for those who] seize the prey, for their deeds'. This means that the size of the effort to obtain a specific benefit somehow closes the eyes of the goddess to justify it. The rest of the poet's statement seems to go in the same direction. The phrase πάσης δ' ἔριδος κλέος ἐσθλόν, 'useful/effective fame in every dispute' may refer to the glory that the victor gains without a clear emphasis on the rightness of the cause he undertook.

<sup>56</sup> J. Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*, vol. I: *Israel's Gospel*, Downers Grove 2003, *passim*.

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.theoi.com/Text/OrphicHymns1.html#32> [accessed: 24.7.2023].

The attention of the goddess is therefore focused only on the greatness of the act itself, or possibly on the sacrifice of the parties, their heroism and bravery. The purpose or means by which it is carried out seem to be of secondary importance to it. However, such a thought is strange to the God of Israel, who always stands first for justice and the rightness of the fights undertaken, as is the case with the Maccabean uprising (1 Macc 3:20–22).

The above conclusion is also confirmed by Xenophon's important mention:

At this critical time the King's army was advancing evenly, while the Greek force, still remaining in the same place, was forming its line from those who were still coming up. And Cyrus, riding along at some distance from his army, was making a survey, looking in either direction, both at his enemies and his friends. Then Xenophon, an Athenian, seeing him from the Greek army, approached so as to meet him and asked if he had any orders to give; and Cyrus pulled up his horse and bade Xenophon tell everybody that the sacrificial victims and omens were all favourable. While saying this he heard a noise running through the ranks, and asked what the noise was. Xenophon replied that the watchword was now passing along for the second time. And Cyrus wondered who had given it out, and asked what the watchword was. Xenophon replied "Zeus Saviour and Victory (Νίκη)." And upon hearing this Cyrus said, "Well, I accept it, and so let it be." After he had said these words he rode back to his own position.<sup>58</sup>

The text clearly mentions Νίκη as a personified victory, expected with the help of Zeus in the upcoming battle of Cunaxa in 401 BC, in which Cyrus the Younger was killed. However, it cannot be overlooked that Cyrus rose up against his elder brother, Artaxerxes II, the legitimate ruler of the Persian Empire. For him, therefore, νίκη was stripped of the postulate of a just fight and for the good of the state. It can be said that the goddess ultimately sided with justice, but not entirely. It gave a complete victory over the Persians to the better trained Greeks, although the hoplites were paid by Cyrus, not by Artaxerxes.

The ideology of the armed struggle, shown in this example, is basically the same as Judas Maccabaeus' approach to his battle: just as in the faith of the Jews, God's will determines everything, so in the religiosity of the ancients, the will of gods is decisive. The difference lies in the radical rejection of their mutual supportive action. Contrary to this belief, the God of Israel gives victory himself, without having to rely on the actions of anyone from the world of other gods.

The above texts are an example of the ancient Greeks personifying their victories in a winged goddess named Νίκη, to whom Hesiod gave the status of

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<sup>58</sup> Xenophon, *Anabasis*, tr. by C.L. Brownson, rev. by J. Dillery, (Loeb Classical Library 90), Cambridge, MA 1998, pp. 118–121.

a living being, the daughter of the Titan Pallas and the underground river Styx.<sup>59</sup> The myth of Nike says that when Zeus was gathering allies at the beginning of the Titan War, Styx brought her four children: Nike (Victory), Dzelos (Rivalry), Kratos (Strength) and Bia (Force) into the service of the gods' ruler. Nike was appointed his charioteer, and together the four became guardians of Zeus's throne.<sup>60</sup> According to the account of Pausanias, Nike, as a small figure, is held in one hand of Zeus and the royal scepter in the other (ἔχει δὲ ὁ μὲν σκῆπτρον καὶ Νίκην) as his attribute,<sup>61</sup> similarly as in Athena's hand about four cubits high (Νίκην νε τεσσάρων πηχῶν).<sup>62</sup> Sometimes the goddess appears as a messenger of victory, carrying a palm branch, a wreath or the staff of Hermes. Nike is also depicted as lifting a trophy or often hovering with outspread wings<sup>63</sup> above the winner in sports competitions, as her functions extended to success not only in war<sup>64</sup> but in all competitions. Her role in life was to fly over the battlefields and reward the victors. The heroes received wreaths of laurel leaves, symbolizing fame and glory. Over time, Nike came to be recognized as an intermediary of success between gods and people. An interesting interpretation was adopted by the image of wingless Nike in the description of Sparta by Pausanias:

[Opposite the temple is a statue of Enyalios [i.e. Ares the Warrior] having shackles on his feet. The symbolism for this image among the Lacedaemonians is the same as for the image of Nike Ἄπτερον [i.e. Wingless] among the Athenians. Namely, the Lacedaemonians

<sup>59</sup> Hesiod, *Theogony* 383–385; Apollodorus, *Library* 1,2.4. Bacchylides also believed in Nike as a goddess, writing about her as 'dark-haired', giving victory in chariot races (*Epinicia*, *Ode* 5.34). A well-known place of worship of the goddess is the island of Samothrace, from which the statue of the winged Nike from the sanctuary of the Great Gods was brought to the Louvre by the French from the early 2<sup>nd</sup> BC. The statue was probably made as a votive of the victory of the Rhodians over Antiochus III the Great, M. Wood, B. Cole, A.M. Gealt, *Art of the Western World: From Ancient Greece to Post Modernism*, New York 1989, p. 16.

<sup>60</sup> Hesiod, *Theogony* 388–402.

<sup>61</sup> Pausanias I, 1.3.3–4. The statue of the ruler of gods, together with the statue of the goddess Athena holding a spear, was erected by the inhabitants of the capital in gratitude for the victory of the city's strategist, Conon, over the Spartan fleet near Cnidus in 394 BC.

<sup>62</sup> Pausanias I, 1.24.7. Nike as one of the attributes of Athena is presented by Euripides, *Ion* 1529, Sophocles, *Philoctet* 134. More on the cult of Athena identified with Nike and taking over her attributes, cf. I.S. Mark, *The Sanctuary of Athena Nike in Athens: Architectural Stages and Chronology*, (Hesperia Supplement 26), American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Princeton 1993; B.S. Johnston, *Victorious Athena: The Cult and the Temple of Athena Nike*, Annandale-on-Hudson, Senior Projects Spring 2018, [https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1218&context=senproj\\_s2018](https://digitalcommons.bard.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1218&context=senproj_s2018) [accessed: 2.7.2023].

<sup>63</sup> Νίκη πτερά, 'Nike Feathered, Winged', Pausanias I, 5.17.3.

<sup>64</sup> In this way, e.g. in Lacedaemon, where in the temple of Zeus Cosmeta (*Orderer*) 'The west portico has two eagles, and upon them are two Victories' (ἀετούς τε δύο τοὺς ὄρνιθας καὶ ἴσας ἐπ' αὐτοῖς Νίκας), Lysander's achievements in the victories won by him in two battles, Pausanias I, 3.17.4.



daemonians believe that the bound Enyalios will never leave them or escape. And the Athenians believe that Nike will always be with them because she has no wings (Ἀθηναίων δὲ τὴν Νίκην αὐτόθι ἀεὶ μενεῖν οὐκ ὄντων πτερῶν πτερῶν)].<sup>65</sup>

This interpretation indicates the possibility of modifying the role, tasks or capabilities of the deity depending on the needs of beliefs or superstitions. Here people define what a deity can and cannot do. By symbolically cutting off the wings of the goddess, they condemn her to stay among them permanently and guarantee victories in future battles. Thus, here the goddess becomes the hostage and servant of the people. Such an interpretation of the role of the almighty God of Israel is absolutely impossible in the faith of Judas and the rebels.

## VI. Conclusions

Summarizing the above arguments, one should probably agree with the conclusion that the author of 1 Macc used the term on purpose, and rather not referring to any of the earlier biblical texts. The one-time appearance of νίκη in the text of the book allows us to reach for the extra-biblical milieu of its occurrence. First, therefore, it is necessary to state, above all, the military-religious context of the use of νίκη both in 1 Macc 3:19 and in the cited examples of ancient Greek literature, although the latter also contains numerous examples of sports competition as a context for the use of νίκη. If we focus on the military-religious conditions of the presence of νίκη in ancient texts, the noun functions in the range from minimalist (limiting the role of deities in battles to a generally understood minimum) to maximalist understanding (when they basically determine the entirety of events on the battlefield, and armies are merely instruments of their operation). In this regard, the discussed verse of 1 Macc is clearly close to the maximalist understanding of the role of God in the fight, which is consistent with the overall faith of Israel throughout its history. It is worth noting that the ancient texts, treating the role of deities insignificantly, soberly approach the issue of the size of the army as a factor that primarily affects the outcome of battles (Xenophon, Demosthenes, Appian of Alexandria). Conversely, in the texts giving the deities the primary importance in the battles, the theme of the size of the army appears as strongly as in 1 Macc, which is shown by an example of Plutarch's note in

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<sup>65</sup> Pausanias I, 3.15.7. The statue of the wingless goddess is also mentioned by the writer in 1.22.4; 2.30.2 and 5.26.6 most likely from the same belief that Nike, having no wings, will not fly away from the inhabitants of individual cities, Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, Vol. II, Books 3–5 (*Laconia, Messenia, Elis I*), tr. by W.H.S. Jones, H.A. Ormerod, (Loeb Classical Library 188), Cambridge, MA 1926, pp. 92–93.

Camillus. The unexpected victory was immediately attributed to the actions of the deities.

However, the hagiographer strongly opposes to two important aspects of ancient Greek beliefs. The first is the radical rejection of the gods' demand for sacrifices from innocent representatives of the local community in exchange for their consent or help in the expected cause. Such an attitude of the gods betrays something completely opposite to the action of the God of Israel. They care primarily about their own prestige, satisfying personal anger at people or simply recognizing their superiority over them, and the good of people giving them glory is in second place. For their help, they often simply order to pay with considerable sacrifices made by the interested parties. Voluntarily sacrificing one's own life or being compelled to do so seems to have no influence on the decisions of the deities who are satisfied with the mere fact of making a sacrifice. Meanwhile, God's radical declaration in Jer 7:31 prohibits the Israelites from doing this in any form and intention.<sup>66</sup> Almighty God does not need human sacrifice to ensure victory. Conversely, His fundamental demand is fidelity to His law, which means that it is not an innocent substitutionary sacrifice, but one's own effort in faithfulness to the covenant that decides about God's help.

Finally, in the text of 1 Macc 3:19, one should notice an equally radical rejection of the personification of victory in the person of the goddess, who is given the ability (at her discretion) to bestow victories on the fighting parties. It is worth emphasizing that according to beliefs, the goddess herself recognizes the greatness of the act and the accompanying sacrifice, heroism and bravery of the parties. The purpose or means by which the struggle is conducted seem to be of secondary importance to it. As it can be easily guessed, the biblical author does not agree with the idea of cooperation of the gods in the fight. This is understandable when one believes in polytheism, which immediately limits the areas and possibilities of their operation and makes them non-omnipotent and interdependent. The one God of Israel does not need anyone to help, he alone ensures victory in the fight. In this way, the theology of God above idols and their depreciation in the eyes of the Israelites are revealed. The hagiographer directs his statement against idolatry also by the fact that *νίκη* is not something separate, independent, but only the effect of God's action in His own power. In this way, it can be concluded that 1 Macc 3:19 combines faith in the divine guarantee of victory coming in a humanly hopeless situation with the necessity of fundamental rejection of idolatry.

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<sup>66</sup> Lev 18:21; 20:1–5; Deut 12:31; 2 Kgs 17:17; 23:10; Ps 106:37–38; Ezek 16:20.

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