

# The Reception of the Maccabean Martyrs

Their Historiographical and Paradigmatic Functions  
in Antique and Late-antique Jewish and Christian Sources



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<p>The study attempts a reception-historical analysis of the Maccabean martyrs. The concept of 'reception' has fundamentally to do with the re-use and interpretation of a text within new texts. In a religious tradition, certain elements become re-circulated and thus their reception may reflect the development of that particular tradition. The Maccabean martyrs first appear in 2 Maccabees. In my study, it is the Maccabean martyr figures who count as the received text; the focus is shifted from the interrelations between <i>texts</i> onto how the figures have been exploited in early Christian and Rabbinic sources.</p> <p>I have divided my sources into two categories and my analysis is in two parts. First, I analyze the reception of the Maccabean martyrs within Jewish and Christian historiographical sources, focusing on the role given to them in the depictions of the Maccabean Revolt (Chapter 3). I conclude that, within Jewish historiography, the martyrs are given roles, which vary between ultimate efficacy and marginal position with regard to making a historical difference. In Christian historiographical sources, the martyrs' role grows in importance by time: however, it is not before a Christian cult of the Maccabean martyrs has been established, that the Christian historiographies consider them historically effective.</p> <p>After the first part, I move on to analyze the reception in sources, which make use of the Maccabean martyrs as paradigmatic figures (Chapter 4). I have suggested that the martyrs are paradigmatic in the context of martyrdom, persecution and destruction, on one hand, and in a homiletic context, inspiring religious celebration, on the other. I conclude that, as the figures are considered pre-Christian and biblical martyrs, they function well in terms of Christian martyrdom and have contributed to the development of its ideals. Furthermore, the presentation of the martyr figures in Rabbinic sources demonstrates how the notion of Jewish martyrdom arises from experiences of destruction and despair, not so much from heroic confession of faith in the face of persecution.</p> <p>Before the emergence of a Christian cult of the Maccabean martyrs, their identity is derived namely from their biblical position. Later on, in the homiletic context, their Jewish identity is debated and sometimes reconstructed as fundamentally 'Christian', despite of their Jewish origins. Similar debate about their identity is not found in the Rabbinic versions of their martyrdom and nothing there indicates a mutual debate between early Christians and Jews.</p> <p>A thematic comparison shows that the Rabbinic and Christian cases of reception are non-reliant on each other but also that they link to one another. Especially the scriptural connections, often made to the Maccabean mother, reveal the similarities.</p> <p>The results of the analyses confirm that the early history of Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism share, at least partly, the same religious environment and intertwining traditions, not only during the first century or two but until Late Antiquity and beyond. More likely, the reception of the Maccabean martyrs demonstrates that these religious traditions never ceased to influence one another.</p>		
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καὶ μετ' αὐτῶν ἀθλούντων εἰμι τῆ διανοίᾳ,  
καὶ τῷ διηγῆματι καλλωπίζομαι.

“I myself am transported with ecstasy in recalling them;  
my thoughts become theirs at their martyrdom,  
and I am enhanced in the telling.”

Gregory of Nazianzus: *Oratio* 15.7.

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# 1. Introduction

The story of the Maccabean martyrs appears and reappears in historiographies and homilies and is exposed to various, even conflicting, elaborations. By acquainting myself with the reception of these particular figures, I hope to be able to provide a glimpse of the diverse yet shared reality of antique Judaism and Christianity and, more generally, an impression of how religious traditions are received and live on. The reasons which motivate this study are prolific. The Maccabean martyrs, considered perhaps marginal at first sight, demonstrate an evolving reception-history which relates thematically to the formation of both Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism. In fact, it may be exactly the marginality of the martyrs which provides us with such an insight. After all, they are initially Jewish martyrs, whose ethos is found most appealing among early Christians.

The purpose of the introductory chapter is to explicate the research question and aims of the study at hand. The topic and approach of the study are first sketched out in a general and brief review of the emergence of “the Maccabees” as the Maccabean martyrs in sources. The sketch leads the readers instantly into the basic problems of the study, related to the nature of source materials. That is followed by a presentation of source materials and along with it; the readers are introduced to a categorization used in the study, namely, to the division between historiographical and paradigmatic. The categorization aims at overcoming the problems related to the nature of sources. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a review of the relevant research history, to which I relate my expectations of this study.

## 1.1. *Research Question*

The topic of my study is the reception of the Maccabean Martyrs. They are an old scribe Eleazar, seven brothers and their mother. The figures first appear in 2 Maccabees, which is a Jewish text dated back to the Second Temple Period, and in 4 Maccabees, which is the oldest Jewish text devoted to martyrdom in its entirety.<sup>1</sup> I am concerned about the reception of these Jewish martyr figures in Jewish and Christian texts within a rather broad time span, that is, Antiquity and Late Antiquity. The period is regarded as the formative years not only of Christianity but also of Rabbinic Judaism (the form of Judaism which followed

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<sup>1</sup> van Henten 1997, 58.

Second Temple Judaism) and is sometimes described as the period of parting of the ways of Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity.<sup>2</sup>

My method is derived from the analysis of reception-history and history of influence. As the title indicates, the analysis is double-barreled: first, I analyze the historiographical functions bestowed upon the figures, and secondly, their paradigmatic functions. However, before entering into the discussion of the categorization, I will introduce the readers to the protagonists themselves.

## **1.2. How Do ‘the Maccabees’ Appear?**

This chapter sketches out the profile of the Maccabean martyrs as they appear in the sources of my study.<sup>3</sup> Along with the sketch, the readers are provided with the basic criteria for tracking the cases of reception within the source material, that is, what I have considered a case of reception, how I have recognized and identified the characters.

The earliest actual references to ‘the Maccabees’ are made by Christian authors in late-second and early-third centuries: Hippolytus mentions the events related to Judas Maccabeus and his father Mattathias “as they have been all clearly described in Τα Μακκαβαϊκά.<sup>4</sup> Thus, ‘the Maccabees’ stands for the name of the books, not of any particular persons or people.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Eusebius refers to “the Maccabees who fought so valiantly”, but based on his text one cannot directly tell about the character of the battle or the people involved.<sup>6</sup> To be exact, the title, ‘the Maccabees’, is never mentioned in any of the Books of Maccabees in plural.<sup>7</sup> The martyrs are not connected to Judas Maccabeus or to any other identifiable group in 2 or 4 Maccabees.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For a critical discussion on ‘the parting of ways’ of late-antique Jews and Christians, see Ch. 1.4.2., and the conclusion Ch. 5.

<sup>3</sup> A reference to an antique source includes the following information: author, if known: name of the text provided with the number of passage in the text edition; abbreviation of the publication series, page number in that publication. If not separately mentioned, the quotations are from the translations used.

<sup>4</sup> Hippolytus: *Comm. Dan.* 10-11; PG 10, 649. According to van Henten, Hippolytus provides us with the earliest reference made explicitly to the Maccabees, implying 1 Macc; note 16 in van Henten 2010b, 336. According to Grintz, the name is given to the books by church fathers (Clement and Eusebius); Grintz 2007a, 316. See also Goldstein 1984, 3.

<sup>5</sup> In *Adversus Judaeos*, Tertullian mentions the “et temporibus Machabeorum”, which could refer to a group of people; Tertullian: *Adv. Jud.* 4; Fontes Christiani 75, 192. However, the reference is probably made the Maccabean rebels in mind, not the martyrs

<sup>6</sup> Eusebius: *Hist. eccl.* 3.10.6; PG 20, 244.

<sup>7</sup> In 1 Macc, “Maccabeus” is an epithet given to one of Mattathias sons, Judas; 1 Macc 2:2-5; see also 2 Macc 2:19; 5:27; 8:1. The meaning of the epithet is unclear; Schalit 2007b, 509.

<sup>8</sup> In 4 Maccabees, Judas is never mentioned, neither is his epithet.

The earliest Christian writers to discuss the martyrdoms of 2 Maccabees 6-7 (and 4 Maccabees) are Origen and Cyprian in the mid-third century but neither of them calls the martyrs ‘the Maccabees’.<sup>9</sup> In a manner similar to Hippolytus, they refer to (the books of) Maccabees, in which the story found.<sup>10</sup> Finally, by the turn of the fourth century, ‘the Maccabees’ appears in a setting where it refers exclusively to martyrdom, but there the Maccabean martyr figures – Eleazar, the brothers and their mother – are only implicit.<sup>11</sup> Both Aphrahat and Ephraem – the most famous Syriac Christian authors of Antiquity – show to have known the martyrs in the fourth century; however, in Syriac Christianity, they are Eleazar, Shmuni and her sons, not the Maccabees.<sup>12</sup> In the 380s, Ambrose calls the martyrs by the name “children of the Maccabees” and implies that Judas and his brothers were their parents.<sup>13</sup> Hence, it is not before that century that we find a reference to ‘the Maccabees’, referring to the Maccabean martyrs exclusively: in his sermon devoted to the Maccabean martyrs, Gregory of Nazianzus implies that the Maccabean martyrs were annually celebrated in the Christian cult,<sup>14</sup> and from then on, ‘the Maccabees’ in Christian sources generally means the martyrs. This sketch illustrates that it takes centuries before ‘the Maccabees’ is connected to the identity of the Maccabean martyrs. The case is yet more multifaceted in regard to the Rabbinic sources.

‘The Maccabees’ never appears in antique or late-antique Jewish sources: Josephus never uses the term and even though there are four Rabbinic version of the martyrdom of a mother and her seven sons, the sons are always anonymous while the mother has various names.<sup>15</sup> As a matter of fact, the word ‘Maccabee’ never occurs in the classical Rabbinic literature; instead, there are some references

<sup>9</sup> Origen: *Exhortatio ad martyrium*; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 3-47. Cyprian: *Ad Fortunatum*; CCSL 3, 183-216.

<sup>10</sup> Origen: *Mart.* 23; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 20. Cyprian: *Fort.* 11; CCSL 3:1, 205.

<sup>11</sup> The sources implies that all true martyrs are included in a “race of Maccabees”; *Martyrdom of Saints Montanus and Lucius*; Musurillo, 230.

<sup>12</sup> Witakowski 1994, 155. The origin of the mother’s name is unclear, but it has been suggested that it derives from the epithet Hasmonean (Ἰσσημωναίος; יִשְׁמוֹנִיָּת) which is the name given to the Maccabees in Jewish reception from Josephus onwards; Stern & Bauer 2007, 446. It has also been suggested that it derives from the Hebrew number eight (shmone), marking the amount of the martyrs; Witakowski 1994, 155-7.

<sup>13</sup> Et ne longius vagemur, num minorem de superbo rege Antiocho *Machabaei pueri* revexerunt triumphum quam *parentes propii? siquidem illi armati, isti sine armis vicerunt*; Ambrose: *Off.* 1.202; OECS Ambrose 1, 234. However, Ambrose seems to think that their parents were Judas Maccabeus and his brothers.

<sup>14</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus: *Or.* 15; PG 35, 912-933.

<sup>15</sup> She has no name in *b Git 57b*; in *ER* 1.16.50, *PesR* 43.4 and *SER* 30 she is Miriam.

to “Hashmonay and his sons” which imply Mattathias and his offspring.<sup>16</sup> However finally, the Maccabean martyrs appear in connection to the Maccabean Revolt in a medieval Jewish historiography in the tenth century.<sup>17</sup> In total, it seems that more details about ‘the Maccabees’ emerge in the Rabbinic literature toward the Middle Ages and, as Stemberger suggests, “[i]n certain historical circumstances, the Rabbis had access to and found interest in additional information from the outside”.<sup>18</sup> It is thus among my tasks here to find out how they had access to it and, even more importantly, what their interest was like.

In sum, ‘the Maccabees’ derive from an epithet given to Judas, a military leader during the Maccabean Revolt, in 1 and 2 Maccabees. Thereafter, the name seems to have disappeared in Jewish reception. In Christian reception, “the Maccabees” first alludes to the books that deal with the Maccabean Revolt, as in Hippolytus, or with the martyrs, as in Cyprian and Origen. It is not before their appearance in a homiletical context that the martyrs are made into “the Maccabees”. In that context, Judas and the other potential Maccabees are no longer present.

The current study presumes that, among the written sources accessible to us, the Maccabean martyrdoms first appear in 2 Maccabees 6-7.<sup>19</sup> After having introduced the rather long emergence and establishment of the explicit appearance of the Maccabean martyrs, I want to point out that, in the perspective of my study, reception-history of the Maccabean martyrdoms surpasses the reception of their name.<sup>20</sup> Despite the lack of explicit reference, I call the martyred seven brothers

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<sup>16</sup> Stemberger 1992, 193; Gibson 2007, 316. Some of the references are relatively late and all are more or less difficult to date: they are made in relation to the Hasmonean dynasty and its defeat over Greece, or Hanukkah and the purification of the temple; Stemberger 1992, 194-7.

<sup>17</sup> Stemberger 1992, 203. The historiography, *Josippon*, will be introduced in Ch. 3.5.

<sup>18</sup> Stemberger 1992, 201-2.

<sup>19</sup> This is the starting point of my study and supported by the majority of scholars: van Henten & Avemarie hold that a tradition underlying the rabbinic versions is recorded 2 Macc 7 and 4 Macc 8-18; van Henten & Avemarie 2002, 135-6; see also Flusser 2009, 248. However, it is also possible that the Rabbis of the first centuries never received 2 Macc and thus must have come across the Maccabean martyrdoms in some other way; see, for example, an evaluation of the connectedness between the Books of Maccabees with the version in *ER*, which “is based not only on its source in 2 Maccabees but also on the account and significance given to it in 4 Maccabees; however it is clear that neither was directly used by the author or redactor”; Herr 2007b, 452. 2 Macc is considered the oldest written account; for the dating of sources, see Ch. 1.3.

<sup>20</sup> To be exact, there are several instances of their reception, in which they are never identified as the Maccabees, that is, particularly in the Rabbinic reception. Moreover, to call them “martyrs” in the first place could be criticized as anachronistic as the term martyr does not occur before 150 CE; van Henten 2004, 163-4. In addition, as the term martyr is Christian in origin, it has been debated if it is correct to impress a Christian concept onto a Jewish phenomenon. The question of their martyrdom is discussed e.g. in van Henten 1997, 6-7. In this study, these two issues are ignored

and their mother, often accompanied with an old scribe Eleazar, the Maccabean martyrs, as I discuss their reception in both Christian and Jewish sources.

### **1.3. Presentation and Categorization of Sources**

I have divided my analysis into two parts. The reception of the Maccabean martyrs is first analyzed in sources which I define as historiographical (Chapter 3). The second analysis focuses on the paradigmatic functions given to the Maccabean martyrs in sources which are not concerned with writing history (Chapter 4). I have chosen two contexts in which the Maccabean martyrs appear to be paradigmatic: first, in the relation to the developing ideas of martyrdom, and secondly, in a homiletic context.<sup>21</sup> As the second analysis is more thematic in approach, I will finally take out a few themes popular in the reception (the reception of the laws/Law and the mother) and attempt an overview.

The idea for this categorization arises from the difficulties I have had sorting out the various sources representing the reception of materials the Maccabean martyrs. The categorization is not perfect, as a categorization never is, but it simplifies and sharpens the approach of my study. Moreover, it enables me to include in the study such sources which have never before been studied comparatively: the sources are not limited within a specific language (Greek, Latin, Hebrew, Syriac, or Arabic) or a specific religious tradition (Judaism or Christianity).<sup>22</sup> In this chapter, the readers are provided with a list of sources analyzed in both parts. Each source or author is supplied with an approximate date, according to the general consensus established in research.<sup>23</sup>

#### **1.3.1. A List and Evaluation of Historiographical Sources**

So, what qualifies as a historiographical source in this study? First, the text must have to do with the religious persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and the

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<sup>21</sup> The two contexts arise partly from the research history of the Maccabean martyrs, which for the most part seems to be concerned with these topics; for the History of Research, see Ch. 1.4. In my opinion, the nature of the sources also supports this: the sources take out the figures as influential martyrs by connecting them to other martyr narratives (e.g. in Origen, Cyprian, and Aphrahat; *b Git* 57b, ER 1.16.50), and maybe the adjective to best cover the most of the cases of reception – both Jewish and Christian – is homiletic, implying not only a sermon/homily but also interpretation/explanation the Scripture.

<sup>22</sup> In her article, Martha Vinson divides the Christian reception of the Maccabean martyrs into categories, such as “purely historical”, “exegetical”, and “hagiographical”; Vinson 1994, 171-5. However, the categorization in her case functions as a means to exclude all the references which are not “hagiographical”, as she is interested in the genesis of the Christian cult of the Maccabean martyrs.

<sup>23</sup> For a date of a particular source, see the introductions of an edition of each text. Bibliographical details for the sources, both for the text and translation used, are found in Ch 6. For the dating of Rabbinic sources in general, see Stemberger 1996; for Christian sources, see Ferguson 1990.

Maccabean Revolt, which is the historical context given to the Maccabean martyrdoms in 2 Maccabees. In addition, in order for the text to be considered historical, it should be concerned with explaining historical events, causes and effects, and a specific historical period, which has a beginning and an ending. Often the author of a historiography introduces his work as a historiography and, although he may have special motives for writing history, he is driven by intent to write down events worth remembering.<sup>24</sup> However, it is not necessary that a historiographical source is objective in any sense; a text, despite its claims, intentions or character, is always subjective and a contextual product.

I have attempted to include all the antique historiographical sources which deal with the Maccabean Revolt in the analysis, because I consider them potential cases of reception of the Maccabean martyrs. These sources are:

	<b>Jewish (in Hebrew)</b>	<b>Jewish (in Greek)</b>	<b>Uncertain Origin</b>
100 BCE	(1 Maccabees)	2 Maccabees	
1 <sup>st</sup> Cen CE		Josephus (35-100)	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Cen		4 Maccabees (70-150)	
[...] <sup>25</sup>			5 Maccabees
10 <sup>th</sup> Cen			Josippon
	<b>Christian (Greek)</b>	<b>Christian (Latin)</b>	<b>Other</b>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Cen CE		Hippolytus (170-236)	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Cen			
4 <sup>th</sup> Cen	Eusebius (260-339)		Aphrahat (336-345)
5 <sup>th</sup> Cen		Augustine (354-430)	
6 <sup>th</sup> Cen	John Malalas (b.480s/490s)		
7 <sup>th</sup> Cen			
10 <sup>th</sup> / 11 <sup>th</sup> Cen			“Additions” in Old Slavonic Josephus

As the list of sources show, there are no extant antique historiographical books with concern to the Maccabean Revolt preserved to us in Hebrew.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, apart from the peculiar case of 5 Maccabees, there are no Jewish historiographies touching the Maccabean period after the second century Common Era within the time span of my study. Furthermore, all the Books of Maccabees are of anonymous origin. As Leonard V. Rutgers pointedly puts it, “it is almost always unwise to rely on argument from silence”.<sup>27</sup> Thus, due to these gaps among the

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. the epitomist’s preface in 2 Macc 2:19-23, or Eusebius’s first lines in *Historia Ecclesiastica*: “I have purposed to record...”; Eusebius: *Hist. eccl.* 1.1.1; LCL 153, 6.

<sup>25</sup> The book could be dated back to late-first or early-second century CE or to the 10<sup>th</sup> century; see Charlesworth 1976, 154-5.

<sup>26</sup> 1 Macc was first written in Hebrew; Grintz 2007a, 316-7.

<sup>27</sup> Rutgers 1998, 296.

Jewish sources, I restrain from evaluating the historiographical role, influence and effectiveness of the Maccabean martyrs in early Rabbinic Judaism.<sup>28</sup>

None of the Christian historiographical sources are devoted wholly to the Maccabean martyrdoms. The story, if incorporated, is always a part of a wider historiographical work. I have included in the analysis the most important early Christian historians.<sup>29</sup> In addition, I have included *5 Maccabees* and the Old Slavonic version of Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum* among the sources, because thematically, their receptions are very interesting and they have barely been touched by modern scholars. Yet, they are not analyzed in depth, as they may be dated outside the time span of my study.

In its entirety, the list shows that, by time, the historiographical attention given to the Maccabean martyrs increases among Christians while Jewish attention fades. This makes the sources (and the analysis) unbalanced in a comparative perspective. Thus, the analysis begins with the Jewish texts on the Maccabean Revolt and the reception of the Maccabean martyrs in it, and it ends with the intensification of the role of the Maccabean martyrs in Christian historiography.

### **1.3.2. A List and Evaluation of Sources with Paradigmatic Functions**

The four rabbinic versions of the mother and her seven sons, included in my sources, are the only existing ones within the classic Rabbinic literature and the span of my study.<sup>30</sup> Instead, I cannot guarantee that I have included all the prevailing cases of Christian reception of the Maccabean martyrs in the second analysis, although that was my original intent.<sup>31</sup> As I have mentioned, the two contexts in which I will analyze the reception of the paradigmatic functions of the Maccabean martyrs are those of martyrdom and cult. Characteristically, these

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<sup>28</sup> None of the Rabbinic versions of the Maccabean martyrdoms locate them in the historical context of the Maccabean Revolt.

<sup>29</sup> I have had to exclude most of the sources which Vinson lists among the "exegetical", because the reference there is often only to the Books of Maccabees or Judas Maccabeus. Such is the case with most of references in Origen's writings; Vinson 1994, 172. However, to exemplify the exegetical reception, I have included Hippolytus (and Aphrahat), because they discuss the historical period of the Maccabean Revolt in their comments on the book of Daniel.

<sup>30</sup> Herr 2007a, 325.

<sup>31</sup> I have excluded the Christian annual calendars of saints even though they include the Maccabean martyrs, because they differ so greatly in style from the other analyzed material; for a discussion of the incorporation of the cult in Eastern Rites, see Rouwhorst 2004, 193-5, for the sources, esp. notes 38-43. For the Western Christian sources, see Rouwhorst 2004, 195-8, again esp. notes 46-61. In addition, there are several references to the Maccabean martyrs in Syriac Christian source which are not edited or published, or are otherwise out of my reach; the most complete collection of those sources is provided by Witakowski; Witakowski 1994.

texts containing the reception of the Maccabean martyrs make explicit reference to the martyrs and highlight their example, exploit a model they provide. The sources concerned are divided in those related to the ideas of martyrdom – exhortations to martyrdom, martyr narratives potentially modeling on the Maccabean martyrs’ example, discourses on martyrdom – and those which celebrate the martyrs as saints or alike. Such sources are:

<b>Second Temple Jewish (Greek)</b>		
100 BCE	2 Maccabees	
70-150 CE	4 Maccabees	
<b>Christian (Greek)</b>	<b>Christian (Latin)</b>	<b>Christian (Syriac)</b>
ca. 100 CE	Hebrews	
late-2 <sup>nd</sup> Cen	<i>Martyrs of Lyons</i>	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Cen	Origen(185-251)	Cyprian (200-258) <i>Martyrdom of Saints Montanus and Lucius</i> <i>Martyrdom of Saints Marian and James</i>
4 <sup>th</sup> Cen	Greg.of Nazianzus (329-390)	Aphrahat (fl. 336-345)
5 <sup>th</sup> Cen	John Chrysostom (347-407)	Ephraem (d. 373)
6 <sup>th</sup> Cen		Leo I (fl. 440-461) Valerian (fl. 439-469)
10 <sup>th</sup> / 11 <sup>th</sup> Cen		“Additions” in Old Slavonic Josephus
<b>Rabbinic Jewish (Hebrew)</b>		
5 <sup>th</sup> Cen (the first half)	<i>Midrash Ekhah Rabbati</i>	
mid-6 <sup>th</sup> Cen	Babylonian Talmud: tractates <i>Gittin</i> and <i>Berakhot</i>	
6 <sup>th</sup> / 7 <sup>th</sup> Cen	<i>Pesikta Rabbati</i>	
(3 <sup>rd</sup> or) 6 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> Cen	<i>Tanna debe Eliyyahu: Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah</i>	
[...]	<i>5 Maccabees</i>	

The list shows that again the Christian reception of the Maccabean martyrs increases by time, although the martyrs seem to have influenced early Christian literature from its very beginning. The same cannot be said about the Rabbinic reception, because of the difficulty in dating the sources. The chronology presented provides us with the approximate dates of the final compilation of the texts.<sup>32</sup> But, in each case, the texts contain material which derives from earlier times. Under these circumstances, there is no certain way to estimate how the Rabbinic interest in the Maccabean martyrs has developed in terms of time.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> For an introduction to the Talmud and Midrash, including dates of compilation, see Stemberger 1996.

<sup>33</sup> The Rabbinic versions are probably inter-related but, again due to their obscure dating, the inter-relatedness is difficult to sort out. Robert Doran has suggested that 2 Macc 7 and *PesR* 43.4 are the oldest versions of the Maccabean martyrdoms and independent of each other, whereas *b Git* 57b depends on 2 Macc 7 and is, again, a source of *ER* 1.16.50 and *SER* 30; Doran 1980, 198-200. Doran hypothesizes on a “typologically earlier” version which was before 2 Macc 7 and similar to *PesR* in structure, but not preserved. On the other hand, Avemarie & van Henten have suggested that the version in *ER* 1.16.50 would be the oldest, followed shortly by *b Git* 57b; van Henten & Avemarie 2002, 145-6. van Henten & Avemarie mention *PesR*, too, and seem to consider it relatively young. They make no evaluation of the date of *SER* as they only mentioned it briefly in note 75; 146. These are the few instances, which I have found, which attempt a chronological system and the comparison shows that there is little correspondence between them.



Thus, I attempt to compare the (re)use of them in paradigmatic functions within the approximate time span, that is, in Antiquity and Late Antiquity.

To talk in generalities, 4 Maccabees derives from 2 Maccabees,<sup>34</sup> and (most of) the Christian cases of reception relate to both of them. However, the scholarly consensus about the reception of 4 Maccabees is unanimous: it is exclusively Christian.<sup>35</sup> Both DeSilva and Herr presume that the Books of Maccabees have had influence on (some of) the Rabbinic versions but they do not claim that the Rabbis would have used the books themselves.<sup>36</sup> The inter-relatedness of the Christian cases of reception – as well as of the Rabbinic versions – is more and less obvious.<sup>37</sup>

The inter-relations of the sources in this category – both among and between the Rabbinic and Christian materials – provoke more questions than can be answered: How dominant is the role of 4 Maccabees in Christian reception, in comparison to 2 Maccabees? What is the Rabbinic reception of 2 and 4 Maccabees like? How heavily do the Rabbinic versions rely on 2 Maccabees, or do they at all? Are there common denominators, or traces of mutual exchange, in Christian and Rabbinic reception, and if so, what are they? Even if I cannot solve these questions, I will provide the readers with an overview of the thematic variations and possible inter-linkages among my sources. As the inter-relatedness cannot be sorted out with a comparison based on exact dating or contextualizing of the materials, my study will test whether a thematic overview may be of help.

#### **1.4. History of Research**

The Maccabean martyrs are well-known in the study of early Christianity: being executed on grounds of their religious devotion, they have been considered pioneers of martyrdom.<sup>38</sup> As a result, both the studies of Christian martyrdom and its origins in general, and the Maccabean martyrdoms in particular, often discuss

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<sup>34</sup> Although the author of 4 Macc is receptive to various ideas which he has found outside 2 Macc.

<sup>35</sup> Amir 2007, 319.

<sup>36</sup> DeSilva remarks that its influence within Judaism has been little and makes a mention only of *ER* 1.16.50; DeSilva 2006, xxxi; according to Herr, the version in *ER* is “based not only on its source in 2 Macc but also on the account and significance given to it in 4 Macc; however it is clear that neither was directly used by the author or redactor”; Herr 2007b, 425.

<sup>37</sup> Again generally, there are links between Greek and Latin cases while the cases in Syriac may be considered more independent; Gwynn 1969, 119. For the inter-relatedness of the Rabbinic sources, see note 33.

<sup>38</sup> “Without Maccabees and without Daniel, a Christian theology of martyrdom would scarcely have been thinkable”; Frend 1965, 65. “Both the phenomenon and the ideology of martyrdom were crystallized in Greek texts written by Jews, before becoming part of Christianity”; Rajak 2001 (1997), 101. A research history of the Maccabean precedence – “a constitué un modèle pour les premières générations chrétiennes par les biais de la littérature maccabéenne” – in notes 2-6; Ziadé 2007, 66-67.

these martyrdoms in a Christian/pre-Christian perspective. However, there has been an increasing interest in the reception of the martyrs in later Christian sources.<sup>39</sup> A corresponding development may indeed appear in regard to the Rabbinic reception; for the present, it is so to a lot lesser degree.<sup>40</sup> To sum up, it is acknowledged that the Maccabean martyrs have a prominent position among other antique martyrs and that they connect (at least thematically) with various martyr traditions – Christian, Jewish, or pagan – but the perspective of reception, both their position in the course of their reception and their connectedness to the developing religious traditions, are far from being exhaustively analyzed.<sup>41</sup>

The contributions of such scholars as Daniel Boyarin, Judith Lieu, and Galit Hasan-Rokem, the study of (late) antique martyrdom has been extended into a study of a discourse in which the emerging Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism engage concurrently, in mutual interaction and influence.<sup>42</sup> In this discussion, the first four centuries of the Common Era are often depicted as “the parting of ways”, exemplifying the growth of both “the Jewish” and “the Christian” into distinctive and separate identities.<sup>43</sup> In such an approach, the Maccabean martyrs are allowed to have both their Jewishness and their intimate connection with early Christian religious thought. Yet, even Boyarin seems to consider the Maccabean martyrs as something related to the origins of martyrdom and dissociates them from the “martyrdom as a (late antique) discourse”,<sup>44</sup> thus ignoring their

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<sup>39</sup> The increased interest is demonstrated by Ziadé 2007 and van Henten 2010, among the various other works used in this study.

<sup>40</sup> The Rabbinic versions are often referred to in a footnote, if at all, in the studies of Christian reception: Ziadé does not list any of the Rabbinic versions while van Henten mentions *ER* 1.16 and *b Git* 57b in note 4; van Henten 1997, 4. The Rabbinic versions are discussed in their own right only by Doran 1980 and in two articles in Hebrew: J. Gutmann (1949), *The Mother and Her Seven Sons in the Aggadah and in the Book of the Maccabees 2 and 4* (in Hebrew). – In Memoriam: Johannis Lewy (1901-1945). Ed. by M. Schwabe & J. Gutmann. Jerusalem: Magnes Press; and G. D. Cohen (1953), *The Story of Hannah and Her Seven Sons in Hebrew Literature* (in Hebrew). – Mordecai M. Kaplan Jubilee Volume: On the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday. Ed. by M. Davis. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary. Indeed, one may consider Hasan-Rokem herself to have done seminal research, as she analyzes the Maccabean martyrdoms in *ER* 1.16.50 in relation to both 2 and 4 Macc and contemporary Christian martyr accounts; see Hasan-Rokem 2000, 114-25. In addition, books, such as Flusser 2009, indicate that the interest of early Jewish studies in the Maccabean matters is increasing: his book, devoted to Second Temple Judaism, includes discussions on the Book of Daniel, martyrs of Masada, festival of Hanukkah related to martyrdom, and in Ch. 17 he explicitly argues for the Jewish origins of Early Christian martyrdom in the Maccabean period; however, Flusser does not refer to the rabbinic versions of the mother and her seven sons.

<sup>41</sup> E.g. in van Henten & Avemarie 2002.

<sup>42</sup> Boyarin: *Dying for God. Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (1999); Lieu: *Image and Reality* (1996); and Hasan-Rokem: *Web of Life* (2000).

<sup>43</sup> Boyarin 1999, 1-2, 11-2, 17-8, 93-5.

<sup>44</sup> Boyarin 1999, 95. Apart from the notes, Boyarin mentions the martyrdom of the mother once only and does not connect it explicitly with the Books of Maccabees; Boyarin 1999, 121.

continuous reception, at least in its complete extent and complexity. The Maccabean martyrs, if involved in the parting of ways, are represented by only their echo in the Christian ideas of martyrdom.

#### **1.4.1. Presentation of the Relevant Research Literature**

At this point, I want to acknowledge, however briefly, the relevant research literature utilized in this study, without attempting to exhaust all the research in history which concerns the Maccabean martyrs. First, the Books of Maccabees have, during the last decades, gained scholarly attention together with the rest of the Second Temple Jewish/apocryphal literature, as they are considered significant with respect to both early Christianity and pre-Rabbinic Judaism, providing a better understanding the “Jewishness of Jesus and of the earliest Christian movement”.<sup>45</sup> In addition, I have greatly benefited from the excellent commentaries by Jonathan A. Goldstein and David DeSilva as well as from Jan Willem van Henten’s study of both 2 and 4 Maccabees.<sup>46</sup> Their approaches are not only thorough but also precise; their books demonstrate their capacity and interest in contextualizing the contents of the respective books.<sup>47</sup>

My categorization of sources – especially the attempt to analyze the reception of the Maccabean martyrs in both Jewish and Christian historiography – appears to be unique and unprecedented in approach and as the results of the analysis will show, the task has also been rewarding. In regard to the historiographical sources, I have relied on John M. G. Barclay, G. W. Trompf and Peter Brown, because they approach my sources with a contextual view: both Barclay and Trompf pay attention to the “morals of historiography”, while Brown makes remarkable notions about the developments of the Christian worldview in the fourth century.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Harrington 2002, 206-10. Accordingly, the contributions are literary, historical, and theological.

<sup>46</sup> Goldstein 1976 and 1984; DeSilva 2006; and van Henten 1997.

<sup>47</sup> 4 Macc plays a crucial role in the (negative and positive) reception of the martyrs as a whole, being a peculiar Diaspora-Jewish text leaning heavily towards Hellenistic philosophy and having extensive Christian reception and no Jewish, and in all its peculiarity, it earns a special position among early Christian and Jewish studies. In the perspective of my study, Tessa Rajak should be credited for both contextualizing 4 Macc and making its martyrs widely know. Her article, *Dying for the Law*, was first published in 1997 and reprinted in 2001. When I refer to it, I keep the original year of publication in the brackets. Boyarin acknowledges the importance her article “In a sense, the gap between the earlier and the later forms could be encapsulated in the gap between the title of Tessa Rajak’s essay on the early material, “Dying for the Law,” and the title of the present work”; Boyarin 1999, 96. Also Shaw 1996 and Barclay 1996 have definitely influenced my evaluation of the book.

<sup>48</sup> Barclay 1996, see e.g. pp. 356-7; Trompf 2000, 3-46, introducing the retributive principles in antique historiography; and Brown 1981. In addition, I have received with gratitude creative input

As a number of academic scholars have already engaged with (at least a part of the) Christian reception of the Maccabean martyrs, the second part of the analysis, the analysis of the reception with paradigmatic functions, does not begin in a vacuum. Recently, Raphaëlle Ziadé has made an extensive study of the Christian reception until the end of fourth century, which offers us a profound insight into the contemporary scholarly consensus concerning the implicit reception/allusions in early Christian martyr accounts.<sup>49</sup>

Generally, the Christian reception has been defined as the Christianization of the Maccabean martyrs. The claim implies that the identity of the martyrs is no longer seen as Jewish but inner mostly Christian.<sup>50</sup> As a result, the Maccabean martyrs are considered not only pre-Christian martyrs, since they reflect similar ideals, but following Constantine, they are seen as proto-martyrs, witnessing to Christ. For more than a century, scholars have debated about the possible Jewish background of the Christian cult of the Maccabean martyrs, which relates to the idea of Christianization. At the other extreme, the Christians in favor of the Maccabean martyrs are credited for taking over a synagogue at Antioch, where the relics of the martyrs were supposedly kept by the local Jews, and Christianizing the veneration of those relics.<sup>51</sup> However, the view has been criticized most indisputably by Rutgers because of the simple fact that no Rabbinic sources indicate such an explicit arrogation.<sup>52</sup> Recently, the debate has ceased as the scholars have reached a consensual view, according to which there is no precise

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of articles combining historical, exegetical and hermeneutic approaches, such as provided by Weitzman 2007.

<sup>49</sup> Ziadé 2007, see esp. pp. 70-103. Most of the sources discussed in Ch. 4.1.1.-2. are found in it.

<sup>50</sup> van Henten's articles of reception; van Henten 2010. See also Nisula 2007. Perhaps a milder view is presented by Rouwhorst, as he uses "spiritualization" instead of Christianization; Rouwhorst 2005, 90-1. In addition, Daniel Joslyn-Siemiakoski has recently published a work, *Christian Memories of the Maccabean Martyrs*, in which he traces the Christian reception all the way until the Modern Era, using memory studies and a heavy load of modern theories (postcolonial); to release the memory of the Maccabean martyrs; Joslyn-Siemiakoski 2009, 3, 6-8. His book has certainly provided me with a point of comparison to my own study of reception. However, I have not used it much because he focuses exclusively on Christian reception, leaving the Jews only the part of the other, the repressed and the colonized. Furthermore, he seems to presume that the Maccabean martyrs are "an example of patterns of early Christian appropriation of Judaism", claiming that Christian "authors utilized Jewish traditions as means of making distinctions from Jewish communities and establishing superiority over them"; Joslyn-Siemiakoski 2009, 25. "Late antique authors on the Maccabean martyrs went about creating useable pasts in the process of creating a Christian imperial culture"; Joslyn-Siemiakoski 2009, 4. As Straw has pointed out in her review, Joslyn-Siemiakoski's book is branded by "a heavy moral burden"; Straw 2010, 473. In my opinion, his stance exemplifies the claim of Christianization taken not as a result of study but as its point of departure.

<sup>51</sup> Schatkin 1974, 104-5; Vinson 1994, 178-89.

<sup>52</sup> Rutgers 1998, 298-300.

knowledge about the state of the Maccabean martyrs before the beginning of the Christian cult.<sup>53</sup>

The most typical conclusion made about the Rabbinic reception is rather simple: the Rabbis were not interested in the Maccabean martyrs.<sup>54</sup> As I have mentioned earlier, one finds only a few articles which discuss the Rabbinic story of the mother and her seven sons in connection with the Maccabean accounts.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the second analysis of my study appears to be unique, because I have included the Rabbinic versions – not only the Christian reception – in it.

In sum, whereas 4 Maccabees and the Christian reception of the Maccabean martyrdoms (mainly Greek and Latin) have been studied to some extent, their Rabbinic reception is very little studied. In addition, there appears to be a plenty of cases of reception in the areas of Syriac Christianity which have hardly been touched.<sup>56</sup> On top of that, there are special cases of reception, such as 5 *Maccabees*,<sup>57</sup> the insertions in the Old Slavonic Josephus,<sup>58</sup> and even Arabic Muslim versions of the Maccabean martyrdoms.<sup>59</sup> The cult of the Maccabean martyrs has been studied only as far as its relatedness to Christian martyr-saints and the possible Jewish origins are concerned; I have not found the Rabbinic versions of the martyrs analyzed in relation to a possible Jewish cult.<sup>60</sup>

I believe it is time to make an effort to bring the Maccabean martyrdoms, as they are told in the Books of Maccabees, in Christian reception (including Syriac sources) and in Jewish and Rabbinic versions, into a single study of their reception. I attempt this exactly, as comprehensively as possible within the material limitations and the time span of Antiquity and Late Antiquity. Thus, the cases of reception included in this study may have much or next to nothing in common, apart from the identifiable figures, of course. Indeed, the development of the reception of the Maccabean martyrs does not form a single picture or a linear but it shows the varied and multiple (re)usability of these figures which are identifiable, deriving from practically the same story, and modified in several contexts.

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<sup>53</sup> Rouwhorst 2005, 188.

<sup>54</sup> van Henten 1997, 2-3.

<sup>55</sup> See note 40.

<sup>56</sup> Witakowski 1994; Abdalla 2009.

<sup>57</sup> For an introduction, see Charlesworth 1976, 153-156.

<sup>58</sup> See Appendix 7 in LCL 210, 642-3, and Mescerskij 2003.

<sup>59</sup> Witakowski 1994, 156-7, n.23. She and her sons are mentioned in one of Abu Nuwwas poems; Abdalla 2009, 24, n. 9.

<sup>60</sup> This, I believe, could be suggested by the Rabbinic homily on Hannah, Samuel's mother in *PesR* 43.4 and later on in the ideology and liturgy of Hanukkah.

### 1.4.2. Notes on Comparison, Categorization, and Expectations

Above, I have referred to the “parting of ways”, which implies a Judeo-Christian discourse, interactivity and mutual exchange, during the first four centuries of the Common Era. In the introduction of his book, Daniel Boyarin has outlined the parting of ways in a following way: he holds that both Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism are defined by the same historical background, that of enslavement and destruction, and that these two religions emerge as a result of a mutual competition from the first century of the Common Era on.<sup>61</sup> With regard to their development and influence, they were not self-containing but, on the contrary, mutual “waves of influence” occurred, which were characteristically dialectical.<sup>62</sup> Finally, the “long fourth century” made the ways part.<sup>63</sup> —

While this new approach to the comparative study of early Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism has been received warmly by some,<sup>64</sup> it has been suspected by others, such as Andrew S. Jacobs.<sup>65</sup> I will present his criticism here, because it pointedly underlines the main difficulties in my study, too. First, Jacobs accuses the “parting of the ways” of romanticism and fantasizing in general.<sup>66</sup> He claims that the idea of parting presupposes that there was a time before – when these religious views were more flexible, engaged in an open dialogue and less prejudiced, and a time after – when these religions were fixed, turned into competitors and unsympathetic of mutual encounters. How then, he asks, should we approach this dialectic period before the parting, during which we cannot distinguish between a proper Jewish identity as opposed to a proper Christian one?<sup>67</sup>

A solution is often provided by “the Rabbis” and “the fathers” who are taken as representatives of these identities. The readers are going to find these representatives also in this study, as I occasionally contrast the Christian reception with the Rabbinic (or the Greek Jewish, that is, 4 Maccabees). Another solution, which the readers will also find applied in my study, is simply to take as “Jewish” any identity presented by a Jew and allow diversity and complexity, even

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<sup>61</sup> Boyarin 1999, 2-3.

<sup>62</sup> Boyarin 1999, 9-10.

<sup>63</sup> Boyarin 1999, 17.

<sup>64</sup> E.g. van Henten 2004, 169-70.

<sup>65</sup> See, Jacobs 2008.

<sup>66</sup> He believes that the concern for Jewish-Christian interaction in the centuries of emergence reflects the aftermath of the Second World War, when it became crucial to either trace anti-Semitism or find alternative ways to construct “healthy” or “balanced” Jewish-Christian relations; Jacobs 2008, 171.

<sup>67</sup> Jacobs 2008, 169-70.

contradictions, within it, as it is “developing”, under construction. Jacobs, being negative of both approaches, remarks that the Rabbis and fathers, as we have access to them, provide us with normative discourses which were not universally recognized by the common believers of their time. Furthermore, if we are to take any identity represented by a Jew as “Jewish”, we are in danger of losing any kind of a definition of the word, as we have no “secure historically identifiable groups of Jews and Christians in antiquity”, and the whole comparison loses its meaning.<sup>68</sup> He claims that “to envision religions as stable entities developing coherently over time” represents an “evolutionary view of religions emerged in the nineteenth century” and may explain nothing about how religion worked/works.<sup>69</sup> Lastly, he questions any actual proof for the existence of Jewish-Christian relations, anything but rarity and enmity, in antiquity:

“To read Jews in Christian texts as ‘mere rhetoric’ is either to claim the triumph of Christian supersession and the fallibility of antique Judaism (so Harnack) or to privilege the deeply encoded ‘symbolic anti-Judaism’ that pervades all such Christian writings (so Taylor). Conversely, to read Christian evidence for Jews as reflective of a ‘real situation’ is both to posit the vitality of antique Judaism and possibly to concede a concrete basis for Christian vitriol (see Cameron 1994 and Horowitz 1998).”<sup>70</sup>

Analyzing the Jewish and Christian reception of the Maccabean martyrs in the early centuries of the Common Era, I cannot disagree with Jacobs and yet I need to. I believe that he very accurately questions the project of “parting” and its ideological dimensions. As a matter of fact, it is something similar I suspect in the overall solution about the Christianization-tendency in the reception of the Maccabean martyrs presented above. The genuine – as well as respectable – urge to equalize and be fair can occasionally lead into conclusions beyond the subject matter. Undoubtedly, the Christianization claim has its grounds in the lived reality; however, I believe it should not be taken as the guiding principle in reading the Christian reception of the Maccabean martyrs (as it, in my opinion, seems often to be taken). Similarly, the parting of the ways should not provide a starting point for a study, while it is so vaguely present in the primary sources we have access to.

On a more practical level, Jacobs points to the incommensurability of the source materials which is also seen in my lists of sources (Chapter 1.3.). As Jacobs discovers, “it is rare to find an early Christian text that does *not* speak about Jews and Judaism, and usually in a highly charged (although multifaceted)

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<sup>68</sup> Jacobs 2008, 170.

<sup>69</sup> Jacobs 2008, 170-1.

<sup>70</sup> Jacobs 2008, 172.

way”, and “the quantity and quality of Jewish sources in the first five centuries CE are monumentally dwarfed by what we have from the Christian side”.<sup>71</sup> What we have to content ourselves with is the Rabbinic corpus, written during those centuries but compiled and authorized much later.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, we “slip into an anachronistic essentialism that uncritically takes up the normative discourse of the Rabbis themselves”, to “make rabbinism the voice of antique Judaism”.<sup>73</sup>

Agreeing with Jacobs (as one must), it is no wonder that the Rabbinic versions of the Maccabean martyrs have not been studied together with the Christian reception. Therefore, I want to make it explicit that the inclusion of the Rabbinic materials surely influences the depth and accuracy of my second analysis in total. It is mainly due to the limitations it sets – the impossibilities at dating and contextualizing it – that I have defined my approach and method in this analysis. The nature of the Rabbinic sources does not allow me to speculate about the development of the Rabbinic reception during the early centuries Common Era. Thus, the whole focus of the analysis lies on thematic links and shared features. By the categorization of sources and the two separate analyses, I aim at tackling exactly this fragmentary, superfluous and (in)consistent character of reception of the Maccabean martyrs: by the categorization, I may discuss the temporary developments in historiography, while I am given an opportunity to include the Rabbinic materials in the analysis of paradigmatic functions, in relation to ideas of martyrdom and in homiletic use.

What then, do I expect from the study? I believe that the significance of and reward for the efforts is simply to track the traces of the Maccabean martyrs in their extensiveness. I have not been able to study each appearance with equal care and caution and therefore the comparative aspect of the study is descriptive more than analytical. What I am able to present is a sketch of an orbit, an image of both a shared and yet separate world of Jews and Christians in Antiquity. Bringing together all the growth of the reception, I offer my readers a glimpse of how diverse indeed has the religious mind of the humans been and how, against all odds, the common reality is reflected in what and how religious traditions are received. Moreover, my study will suggest that the dialogue, mutual exchange and influence never ceases. (Hence, the occasional references to the medieval works.) The reception of the Maccabean martyrs hints toward a continuous relationship,

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<sup>71</sup> Jacobs 2008, 172-3.

<sup>72</sup> See Ch. 1.3.2.

<sup>73</sup> Jacobs 2008, 173.



self-definition against the other, while it also shows the independence and separateness of the two religions.

## **2. Methodology**

In the previous chapter, I presented my research topic and the sources of my study divided into two categories. In this chapter, I introduce the readers to the method of my study, the analysis of reception-history, as it has been used in biblical studies. After the general introduction, I will specify my own use of the method, as I have modified it to better suit both the analyses: what qualifies as reception in historiography and how is reception of a paradigm(atic figure/features) (re)constructed? As my approach to the source material is unprecedented, also the methodology I use will be something of a novelty. While presenting the methodology, this chapter provides the readers with a deeper understanding of the categorization itself, explicates my approach, and explains the research question. I hope that my methodology presents a workable, if only tentatively, approach to an extended analysis of reception-history.

### **2.1. Analysis of the Reception-history**

Reception is a reader-centered concept, defined as the meaning which the recipient gives to a text. The process of receiving, i.e. giving meanings to an existing text within a new context, is influenced by the reader – his/her context, tradition, previous knowledge – and the read text.<sup>74</sup> Accordingly, a study of reception stresses on the input of the receiver as the provider of the contents which is communicated by the text which includes the reception.<sup>75</sup> Basically, the ways of receiving are as rich as any communication. The recipient can accept, confirm, deny, or reject the ideas provided by the original text; he/she can reverse, repress, and twist the original meaning, or emphasize it, highlight certain aspects of it. Providing/giving new meanings to existing material, a reception can (and will) change its source in more or less subtle ways. The most subtle yet repressive way to receive is to omit, to erase something. In my study, such a reception is defined as negative. Positive reception thus implies any reception which is explicit, no matter if it is considered to approve or disapprove of the original text. In sum, Reception carries various functions and intentions within. Hence, a very basic point of departure in an analysis of reception is that to select is a must:

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<sup>74</sup> Huttunen 2008, 231.

<sup>75</sup> Räisänen 2001, 269-70. On reader-response criticism, see McKnight 1999.

everything is never received. As it is so, it is interesting to further observe *what* is selected for serving a certain purpose (and what is not, for that matter).

In Finland, biblical scholars, such as Heikki Räisänen and Niko Huttunen, have analyzed the reception-history of the Bible and contributed to the understanding and use of this approach.<sup>76</sup> More specifically (and very recently), Jan Willem van Henten, a scholar much occupied with the Maccabean martyrs, has written two articles about the reception of these figures.<sup>77</sup> All these scholars have in common the general structure of analysis of the reception of a certain text: (1) an intertextual analysis, (2) an analysis of reception, and (3) an analysis of the effective history.<sup>78</sup>

First, the intertextual analysis is meant to trace the reception of a certain text by criteria specified by the analyzer.<sup>79</sup> Secondly, the reception of that certain text is analyzed within the text which contains the reception, taking the broader literary context into account as well as the identity/position/intentions of the author.<sup>80</sup> The last stage of the analysis, the analysis of the effective history, is perhaps the most intangible. In it, the analyzer attempts to define and evaluate the changes (intended/unintended) taking place between the text within the reception text and the original text.<sup>81</sup> I rely mostly on Räisänen, who has introduced four

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<sup>76</sup> The sources used are primarily Räisänen's article "The 'Effective History' of the Bible: A Challenge to Biblical Scholarship?" in his book, *Challenges to Biblical Interpretation: Collected Essays 1991-2001* (2001), and Huttunen's article "Raamattu historiassa. Reseptio- ja vaikutushistoriallinen eksegetiikka" in *Teologinen Aikakauskirja* 113 (2008), 230-50.

<sup>77</sup> van Henten 2010a; 2010b.

<sup>78</sup> This three-fold analysis is explicated by Huttunen 2008, 232; for a comparative application of method, see van Henten 2010a, 360-2. While Huttunen builds on the works of Räisänen (1997, 2000, and 2001), Luz (1994) and eventually on history of tradition and questions of hermeneutics (as in Gadamer 2007), van Henten focuses more on relationships between texts, e.g. on their possible literary inter-dependence (following i.a. Dimont 1988). Yet, both emphasize the role and exploitation of a/the (common literary) tradition and reception as the process of re-interpretation of a text within another text.

<sup>79</sup> Both Huttunen and van Henten list various forms of appropriation of a text in another text; Huttunen 2008, 232-3; van Henten 2010a, 360-2. van Henten uses simply the word *appropriation*. According to him, appropriation of "vocabulary and motifs should be analyzed in contrast with the use of quotations, allusions or paraphrases"; van Henten 2010a, 360. When a connection between texts cannot be localized based on literary criteria, Huttunen exploits the concept of *intertextuality*, which can be constructed by the author (the narrow definition) or, in cases in which one cannot conclusively prove that the author has exploited a specific text, by the analyzer (broad definition).

<sup>80</sup> According to Huttunen, the main purpose of this stage is to investigate the ideological connection(s) created in the reception; Huttunen 2008, 234. In van Henten, this analysis is marked with the investigation of the context of and the "larger context" of the reception: the larger context implies the purpose (ideology?) of the work which contains the reception which is defined by its key concepts; van Henten 2010a, 363.

<sup>81</sup> Huttunen 2008, 240-1; van Henten 2010a, 368-7; 2010b, 333. This third stage of analysis corresponds with what Räisänen has defined as "analysis of the 'effectiveness' of a text". With him, we are directed to question what we consider the necessary effects of the original piece, for example, the confessions of faith and the course of mainstream Christians traditions, which are all often been legitimized by the claim that their major shaper was/is the Bible; Räisänen 2001, 266.

types which could be useful in an analysis of the effects of reception.<sup>82</sup> By definition, he distinguishes between the history of the use of the Bible and its effective history as he insists that only if the reception of a text brings about a new idea, instead of just legitimizing already existing practices and structures, it can be called effective.<sup>83</sup> He further acknowledges that any method of assessment of the plausibility of an effect is subjective, as it is influenced by the analyzer's conceptions of causality and of what is traditional, and restricted in the limitations of what can be known.<sup>84</sup>

Reception is subjective and has to do with selection. Simultaneously, the analysis of reception-history provides an ever-challenging point of self critique: I never read everything; there is constant selection in my observations. Therefore, the analysis of the reception-history could be explicated in a self-reflective circular deduction: first, the observation, that is, what caught my eye; secondly, the analysis of the observation, that is, what I make out of the observation and why I find it meaningful; and lastly, re-evaluation of the observation, that is, after the critical analysis of the observation, whether it yet appears to be meaningful.<sup>85</sup>

Now, the basic structure of three-fold reception-historical analysis is exploited in this study and the question of the effects and a change in religious thought will be further discussed at the end of this chapter. Before defining my own use of the method, I must discuss certain immediate difficulties which arise from the subject of my research.

I am interested in the reception and re-use of certain figures/characters, not exactly in the reception of a certain text. In most cases of reception of the Maccabean martyrs, 2 Maccabees 6-7 would qualify for "that certain text" received. However, to distinguish between the reception of 2 and 4 Maccabees in most of the Christian cases of reception is practically impossible.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, in the Rabbinic versions it is not necessarily 2 Maccabees 7 which is received but

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<sup>82</sup> Those are: (1) a biblical word leading into change in lifestyle, often found in biographical narratives, for example, when Origen decides to castrate himself as a result of effective reception; (2) broad influence in the symbolic universe of Christians that is hardly definable and impossible to measure, resulting, for example, in the creation of so-called "Christian Europe"; (3) religiously-evoked emotions (positive, such as hope and courage, or negative, such as fear) that influence actions of individuals and are even more problematic objects of analysis; and lastly, (4) models of identities and behavior taken from a biblical text and provided for people as stereotypical examples that set Christian ideals. This kind of influence is traceable and often functions successfully in a construction of religious identity, that is, an identity which provides the individual and/or groups with endurance, encourage, and hope; Räisänen 2001, 273.

<sup>83</sup> Räisänen 2001, 270.

<sup>84</sup> Räisänen 2001, 271.

<sup>85</sup> On the analyzer as a recipient, see Huttunen 2008, 240.

<sup>86</sup> Ziadé 2007, 69.

perhaps only the same narrative which the author of 2 Maccabees used.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, the interest of this study is in the reception of certain figures which, apparently, first appear in 2 Maccabees 6-7.<sup>88</sup>

As I have among the cases of reception texts in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Syriac, and Arabic, my criteria for finding intertextual connections are not very strict:<sup>89</sup> I have searched for texts which talk about a specified group of people – seven brothers, their mother and possibly their teacher, Eleazar – who are compelled to renounce their religion in one way or another, and among whom all die for that particular cause or in its aftermath. The sources that meet these criteria are of varied nature: there are historical narrations, letters, philosophical-theological treatises, sermons, lectures (midrash), and hymns; some of the recipients are identifiable and well known, such as e.g. Augustine of Hippo, but others are anonymous and only suggestively dated, such as is the case of all the Rabbinic versions. Because of these variations, I limit myself to analyzing the literary context of the reception: I look at the literary frame in which the reception is embedded for indicators of interpretation.<sup>90</sup> Lastly, by comparing the reception with the original text (2 Macc 6-7) or related receptions, I pick out similarities and differences in the re-use of these martyr figures. The comparison is descriptive and thematic.

In Chapter 1.3., I have defined and introduced a categorization of the studied source materials, which should help me to determine what exactly I am searching for in the respective source and how I analyze it. Next, I intend to specify my definition of the reception in historiographical sources and in sources with paradigmatic functions.

### 2.1.1. Reception in Historiography

In antiquity, the practical role of history was to educate.<sup>91</sup> Historiography is a major source for the study of collective memory, as historiography was and is essentially about fixing memories.<sup>92</sup> If the Maccabean martyrs are remembered in

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<sup>87</sup> See e.g. note 19.

<sup>88</sup> Räsänen has remarked that effective history is “palpable in areas *not* limited to the church: customs, legislation, politics, culture at large”; Räsänen 2001, 271. This notion in mind, I believe it is justifiable to approach the question with a rather loose criteria; impressions of figures can be translated and transferred through various types of images.

<sup>89</sup> Especially in comparison to van Henten 2010a and b.

<sup>90</sup> This, I believe, is what van Henten means with the “larger context”; van Henten 2010a, 363.

<sup>91</sup> Mendels 2004, xiv; Barclay 1996, 357; Trompf 2000, 1.

<sup>92</sup> Mendels 2004, viii. The concept of collective memory was first introduced by the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1877-1945); see *M. Halbwachs: On Collective memory*, edited, translated

a historiography concerning the Maccabean Revolt, what is remembered of them?<sup>93</sup> (Re)Constructing the past is as selective as the concept of reception discussed above. The past is always constructed with a scheme in mind and plot-building makes certain characters and/or events meaningful and, as a by-product, something else is made marginal.<sup>94</sup>

As the antique historiographical sources dealing with the Maccabean Revolt are not abundant, the analysis aims at covering most of the antique historians who touch the topic.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, the logical starting point of the analysis of reception is to ask: is there explicit reception in the respective historiography or not?<sup>96</sup> If the question is answered in the affirmative (i.e. positive reception), I move on to ask, what the reception is like. If in the negative, I ask why it is lacking and if there is anything which would imply negative reception.

In analyzing the historiographical sources, the questions of intertextuality deal with the selection: what is re-written, what is left out? The analysis of reception – including both the positive and negative – connects with authorial intentions, aims and purposes.<sup>97</sup> By what criteria is something to be defined as omission or repression, instead of being a mere human lapse of memory? What can be considered oppositional and competitive and what is only different? As no analyzer has access to the author's mind, I try to clarify these criteria by lining up the historiographical source materials as they will be analyzed in Chapter 3.

First, among the Books of Maccabees, those which deal with the Maccabean Revolt including the martyrs I ask: where is the focus of events; who are the main characters; whose perspective does the author pick; what does he begin with and

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and introduced by L. A. Coser. “With the advantage of hindsight one may now (that is, after almost half a century) assert with some confidence that his work on collective memory is pathbreaking and will have continued impact”; Coser 1992, 21. Already Halbwachs connected collective memory specifically with religious history; the past carrying religious/theological implications; see esp. Ch. 6 on *Religious Collective Memory*. It has been further applied in historical studies as well as in biblical studies and studies of Early Christianity; e.g. Castelli 2004; Mendels 2004. For a critical discussion on the use of collective memory in a historical study, see Confino 1997, 1386-403.

<sup>93</sup> Conversely, If they are not remembered, does it mean they were forgotten, that is accidentally ignored, because they were lacking in significance? Or, could it be that their memory was intentionally repressed and perhaps substituted with something else?

<sup>94</sup> See e.g. “Recycling the Past: Fragmented Historical Memories, Comprehensive and Collective memory” and “The Selective Collective Memory: Plato’s *Politeia*” in Mendels; Mendels 2004, 30-47, 60-8.

<sup>95</sup> For the list of sources, see Ch. 1.3.

<sup>96</sup> This is in contrast with the studies of reception by van Henten who begins the analysis with a reference, not with a search for it; van Henten 2010a and b.

<sup>97</sup> To evaluate authorial intentions in a case of negative reception is hermeneutical and speculative in nature. van Henten does not engage in such an analysis while Räisänen encourages it; Räisänen 2001, 271, 280.

how does he conclude? Each account can be discussed on its own and finally compared. Moving on, I focus on the negative reception of the Maccabean martyrs in Josephus' historiographical works: what does Josephus remember, what does he (want his readers to) forget?<sup>98</sup> Lastly, with regard to the Christian historiographies, I focus on the authors' interests in the Maccabean martyrs, as all the authors were familiar with the Books of Maccabees but end up using the martyrdoms in ways that serve their projects. As these vary, I have a chance to analyze the development of the role of the Maccabean martyrs while the Christian view of history itself is developing. The whole analysis of reception in historiography boils down to the question of efficacy: who in the history has the power to change and/or influence things; what actions make a historical difference?

In sum, the three-fold analysis of reception in historiography is: to find out if there is positive, negative, or no reception in the historiography concerned; to look at the purpose of the historiography given by the author; and lastly, to ask if the reception implies a historical difference, that is, if the martyrs are given an effective role in the course of history or not. The first stage of analysis is the most distinctive because there I attempt to differentiate between negative reception and lack of reception: negative reception implies a repressive reception, that is e.g. intentional exclusion of the Maccabean martyrs from a historiography or diminishing of their importance; if there are no signs of positive or negative reception in the historiography, only then it can be concluded that there is none, that is, that the author did not know about the martyrs at all.

Both Judaism and Christianity are often defined as historical religions. Therefore, they are contained with a certain theological "sense of history", an interpretative tool to relate to the past with, and have a tendency to view the past using this sense.<sup>99</sup> Of course, the sense itself does not exist or cannot be captured as it is just as much subjected to historical change as anything else. Does this not lead us to conclude that historiography as a whole, being pregnant with paradigmatic functions, falls into my second category, that of sources with paradigmatic functions?<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> The character of Josephus makes it theoretically possible to analyze the negative reception of the martyrs, as he is considered one of the best known figures in antiquity; Rajak 2001, 137-8.

<sup>99</sup> Barclay calls it a "moral perception of history"; Barclay 1996, 357. See also Trompf on retributive principles in antique historiography; Trompf 2000, 3-46; and Mescerij 2003, 39-40.

<sup>100</sup> In fact, the study of social identity, which will be discussed in the following chapter, often finds a counterpart in the historical study of the community. The foundation for a social identity and the

At this point, I take a chance to clarify that the purpose of my categorization is not to claim that there is a fundamental difference between what historiographical and paradigmatic functions are. To begin with, the criteria for making the categorization are based on the explicit purposes of the texts, not on the results of the analysis. As a matter of fact, the significance of historiography, in my view, is exactly in its value-ladenness; in that sometimes authors chose historiography for promoting a certain worldview, especially if they are concerned with a religion. Barclay pointedly evaluates Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae* as "apologetic historiography", exploiting a title of another book.<sup>101</sup> In my analysis, historiographies are approached with this in mind: that historiography has instrumental value to its author.

By separately analyzing the historiographical sources, I have a chance to look at the effect but also the non-effect of the Maccabean martyrs in historiography. I am convinced that after having been introduced to the analysis, the readers will find their non-efficacy is as interesting as is the actual historical efficacy claimed to the martyrs. The same cannot be achieved with the second category of sources, as it is practically impossible to engage in a study which begins with, "Why does X not deliver a sermon on the Maccabean martyrs?" Therefore, I have modified my methodology a bit differently for the second part of the analysis.

### **2.1.2. A Reception of a Paradigm(atic Function)**

The starting point for the analysis of reception in sources with paradigmatic functions is different from that of the historiographical sources. In this analysis, I therefore must deal only with cases of explicit reception. As "other than historiographical" does not qualify as an attribute, I have chosen two paradigmatic contexts in which to analyze the reception more thoroughly: the context of martyrdom/actual persecution and the homiletical context, that is, the reception in cultic use. These contexts are not comparable to historiography but they provide me with a somehow similar setting of the analysis.

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legitimacy of it are derived from the (mythical) origins of the community and the continuity of the past in the present; Jokiranta 2006, 262. The creation and maintenance of collective memory involves selection, re-organization, re-creation and highlighting (if not canonizing) of certain memories. Jokiranta also refers to Halbwachs' collective memory, explaining how historical memories do not function as an explanation of the past but. Instead, collective memory exploits ideal prototypicality, responding to the contemporary, not the past, needs of the group; Jokiranta 2005, 26-7.

<sup>101</sup> Barclay 1996, 356. See also Sterling 1992.

So, what is a source which contains reception of (a) paradigmatic function(s)? Clear examples of a source in this category are demonstrated in exhortations to and praises of martyrdom, provided by e.g. Origen, Gregory of Nazianzus, or Augustine of Hippo. In these sources, the Maccabees exemplify a model of martyrdom or, more generally, of faith and devoted virtuous life. In such works, the question is not *whether* the Maccabees are admirable or not but what exactly their admirability consists of (and what it does not consist of).

In addition, there are treatises on philosophical or theological subjects in which the Maccabees function as examples among others. Correspondingly, the story of the Maccabean martyrs is often told in the Rabbinic sources among several other examples and connected to a biblical verse and a theological topic. In these cases, it is interesting to analyze the reasons why they are brought into the group of examples (and what is not worth mentioning). A comparative reading helps to delineate what stands out as an exceptional use of the Maccabees.

The martyrs can provide ideal examples of various kinds but generally their functions are positive as the Maccabean martyrs are elevated and admired, and at least theoretically their example is made accessible to all, offering a model of behavior, reaction, devotional attitude, or identity. Furthermore, the martyrs can help tackling a problematic issue: a philosophical agenda in 4 Maccabees, despair in destruction in some of the Rabbinic versions, or the identity-construction against the other, represented by a rather paradigmatic Jew, in certain Christian sermons. The themes which the analysis highlights among the paradigmatic functions, aside from martyrdom and cult, are the virtuous example of the martyrs, questions related to the meaning and importance of law, explaining the scripture, and fashioning the community.

Discourses of identity (construction) are increasingly exploited in the study of Antiquity and martyrdom.<sup>102</sup> Such an approach is useful also to my second analysis, as the use of the Maccabean martyr identity is multifaceted and flexible: in addition to the functions listed above, the Maccabean martyrs represent both genders and several age groups and yet they function as a unit. Moreover, they are biblical and belong to the past and yet they connect with the contemporary issues as they are martyrs. All in all, figures with such a hybrid character are useful in

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<sup>102</sup> See e.g. Castelli 2004; Shaw 1996; Sterling 1992. The concept of identity, as I use it, derives from Stets & Burke, whose definition outlines a combination of the self (based on theories of social identity theory and identity theory, as “reflexive in that it can [...] categorize, classify, or name itself in particular ways in relation to other social categories or classifications”; Stets & Burke 2000, 224.



various projects of religious identity construction.<sup>103</sup> Behind the identity discourse lies a socio-psychological theory of social identity.<sup>104</sup> According to the social identity approach, groups and communities have a tendency of creating social stereotypes and among them an ideal prototype of the community in support of their sense of belonging and sense of distinctiveness. The “comparative nature of identity is essential for understanding the flexibility and the relative character of positive distinctiveness”.<sup>105</sup> Such distinctiveness is demonstrated most interestingly by the Maccabean martyrs who are used by both Christians and Jews in the processes of their identity construction. The ideal prototype is an abstract model which is not only created but also preserved by the community and it serves the group as a target of identification and, thus, strengthens their mutual identification. In a textual study, the examination of identities is limited within the image and impression the text communicates of the prototype and the group. A text is, in any case, relational: it embodies an ideal of its community and an attitude towards its environment, including other communities.<sup>106</sup>

Elizabeth A. Castelli has approached early Christian martyr narratives from the viewpoint of both collective memory and identity construction. She points out that “[m]artyrdom requires audience (whether real or fictive), retelling, interpretation, and world- and meaning-making activity”.<sup>107</sup> This reality is reflected by most, if not all, of the sources of my second analysis: they address a community; the listeners of a sermon or a lecture, readers of a public letter, at least a group of colleagues. Use of paradigmatic figures (or prototypes) may exploit a certain notion of typicality. In the reception of the Maccabean martyrs, the interplay with ideals and typicality finds its most explicit form in the figure of

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<sup>103</sup> In 4 Macc, for example, they are philosophers, scribes and “ordinary people”; Compare with e.g. Paul, who is both a Jew/Pharisee and a Christian; his argumentation is convincing because he is a bit of everything. He is a special case and yet presented as an ideal model.

<sup>104</sup> The theory was first launched by H. Tajfel in the 1970s and 1980s and introduced to biblical studies by P. Esler; see e.g. Tajfel, H., *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (London: Academic Press 1978), and Tajfel, H. & Turner, J. C., *An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict* (pp. 33-47 in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. by W. G. Austin & S. Worchel. Monterey, CA, Brooks-Cole. 1979); and Esler, P., *Galatians* (London: Routledge 1998). It has also been applied to biblical studies by Jutta Jokiranta 2005. Jokiranta holds that social identity approach, when applied selectively, can increase our understanding of antique texts and contexts. She herself has used it e.g. for the creation of theoretical ground for a study of prototypes of a social community; for an introduction to the approach, see Jokiranta 2005, 55-61, 311-328.

<sup>105</sup> Jokiranta 2005, 57.

<sup>106</sup> The questions related to identity are puzzling and cannot be exhausted. The social identity approach can, according to Jokiranta, offer workable “tools to think of the group processes” also when applied in an antique setting; Jokiranta 2005, 59-60.

<sup>107</sup> Castelli 2004, 34.

the mother: both in the Christian and Rabbinic versions, she proves to be an ideal mother and yet against all the customary expectations of a mother. By utilizing the element of surprise, bending the conceptions of “customary” and “normal/natural”, paradigmatic models can reverse meanings.

Due to the nature of the sources,<sup>108</sup> the analysis of paradigmatic functions in the sources which contain reception is less interested in temporary cause and effect and, instead, more focused on thematic linkages and functions of the martyrs which appear effective within the sources. Bringing into comparison the paradigmatic functions of the figures, one can focus on how things may have changed, by trying to find out what was first and what followed. In that way, effect is defined in relation to cause. Another way is to look for repetitive and/or re-circulative uses of certain elements/features and, concurrently, pay attention to the things which are not repeated or circulated. The focus is shifted from the cause onto the experience; onto what was usable and receivable; onto what “lived on”.<sup>109</sup>

These two perspectives are undoubtedly reliant upon each other, as the following example shows. During two centuries, we have three receptions of the Maccabean martyrs around Antioch. First, Gregory of Nazianzus gives a sermon in the memory of these martyr-saints. A couple of decades later, John Chrysostom preaches on the same topic with the relics of the martyrs within reach, and a century from that, John Malalas writes in his historical chronicle about the origin of those relics. Now, this implies a potential chain of influence, as the persons engaged shared the same local orbit and the sources can be chronologically organized. However, approaching the sources from the perspective of cause and effect, one may end up simplifying the history of influence and determining it in retrospect falsely. Therefore, I believe it is more interesting and rewarding to focus on the paradigmatic functionality and make a comparison among the various cases of reception to find out about the varying state of their value and the impressiveness of certain allusions within early Christian and Rabbinic texts.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, the paradigmatic functions are not noteworthy only when they are

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<sup>108</sup> Esp. due to the restrictions set by the Rabbinic materials; see again Ch. 1.3.2.

<sup>109</sup> “His/her experiences are not 'bare' ones, but laden with interpretations”, as the tradition does not only “deeply affect one's experience”, but it “makes experience possible in the first place”, Räsänen 2000, 194. For the concept of “experience” connecting with tradition and interpretation, see Räsänen 2001, 195-199.

<sup>110</sup> This increase/decrease in influentiality does not correspond to Räsänen's idea of “effectiveness”.

exceptional, when something has drastically changed. It is just as well the re-usability of certain elements, in which the paradigmatic purposes are (re)constructed.<sup>111</sup>

### **2.3. The Question of the “Effects” and What a Change Is Made Of**

In his farewell lecture, distinguished biblical scholar Heikki Räisänen reflected on his model of effective interpretation processes related to Holy Scriptures. According to him, a text is formed as a new interpretation of various experiences in changing situations and thus the hermeneutical key to the understanding of the lived reality of Holy Scriptures is found in re-interpretation of a/the tradition, in light of new experiences.<sup>112</sup> During his life work, Räisänen has established a triangular paradigm – “a dialectic between tradition, experience, and interpretation” – to capture the great variety of changes taking place in religious thought.<sup>113</sup>

The process of the development of religious thought implies, according to Räisänen, constant re-interpretation of traditions “in the light of new experiences, and vice versa: experiences are interpreted in the light of traditions. In other words, elements of the tradition are reinterpreted but this happens in the framework of the very tradition in question”.<sup>114</sup> Thus, as the task of interpretation is always subjective, it is also always at least ostensibly limited.<sup>115</sup> The interpretation, if successful, needs to be contemporary and contextual enough to properly address the recipients’ lived experiences, and yet traditional enough to qualify as “true”. My study tackles the questions related to (historical) change, interrelations and maintenance of ideas, in religious thought and practice, as defined by Räisänen. However, in contrast to Räisänen’s distinction between use

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<sup>111</sup> For a good example of the problems with (constructing a) continuity and (relying on) common sources, see van Henten 1995.

<sup>112</sup> Räisänen 2006.

<sup>113</sup> Räisänen 2000, 189. “[T]he dialectical interaction between tradition (symbolic universe), experience and interpretation governs the way in which the world is perceived and interpreted by groups and individuals”; Räisänen 2000, 200. On religion or “religious thought” discussed in Räisänen 2001, 164-6.

<sup>114</sup> Räisänen 2000, 190.

<sup>115</sup> Räisänen explicates this freedom of interpretation within a tradition in the following way: “A human being is born into a community, and a community has its own tradition. The attempts of previous generations to make sense out of experience, to give it form and order have been construed into an authoritative total vision of what the world is ultimately like [...] A community, then, provides its members with a framework into which the experience of the individual is integrated from the start.”; Räisänen 2000, 194.

and effect,<sup>116</sup> I take change as not only explicit radical changes but also smoother developments and even mere maintenance of an idea. Preventing a change from happening is as strong a form of influence on the change-making as is promoting for one.

Concerning the change in a meaning, John S. Kloppenborg has highlighted one aspect of human memory: He argues that a preservation of a memory can be linguistically surprisingly stable and yet very flexible in its performative functions.<sup>117</sup> Hence, the social logics of the message communicated by a literary reference (quote or allusion) may vary greatly even within a short period of time. Changes in the meaning of a memory do not necessarily require centuries of development, which implies that traditions are not as organic as we often think. Furthermore, he states that, even in a relatively stable linguistic transmission, meanings can be extensively flexible, because it is the performative context of the memory which is the determinative factor in the formation of its (new) meaning, interpretation.<sup>118</sup> The performative contexts means the ‘situation’ in which the reception occurs: historiography may qualify for such a situation but even more so an exhortation, a sermon, or an aggravated debate. As a result, the linguistic and/or semantic factors, often given great attention in the study of a reception of a text, are held less determinative in transmission, reproduction or maintenance of a meaningful memory than the performative context of the message communicated.<sup>119</sup>

In the last stage of the analysis – the analysis of the influence and the efficacy of the Maccabean martyrs – the attention is brought back to the story of their martyrdom and its participation in history. Among the types of effect, listed by Räisänen, the main focus of this study lies on the fourth type, where “a biblical

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<sup>116</sup> See Ch. 2.3.

<sup>117</sup> Kloppenborg sums up his approach, deriving from memory studies and neuropsychology, that it provides “a strong caution against excessive claims about the infallibility of memory untutored by written documents and about the ability of members of the Jesus movement to preserve their stories faithfully. The rather startling results that even when a source text is visually present, the subject often deviates substantially from it”; Kloppenborg 2011.

<sup>118</sup> By the performative context, Kloppenborg means the “context in which memory is actualized has an important bearing on what is remembered” and “as tradition moves from one social domain to another, we should expect not only alterations due to the vagaries of memory, but also alterations that are due to the varying social registers in which the tradition is performed. [...] Despite the stability of its wording, the aphorism functions in five quite distinct performative contexts—so distinct, in fact, that it is quite misleading were one to insist that the aphorism remains the same”; Kloppenborg 2011.

<sup>119</sup> Following Kloppenborg, I consider the performative context more important than semantic factor, in analyzing the reception of the Maccabean martyrs. This is especially so with regard to sources such as sermons which are rather free and subjective in their use of sources.

person or an event serves as a model with whom people can identify themselves or their situation”.<sup>120</sup> My study of the reception of the Maccabean martyrs – the aims and purposes of that reception – in various source materials is motivated by the interest in their changing functions in the religious thought of early Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism. The effective role of the martyrs in the explanations of history, which often reflect more the contemporaru than past concerns, and their share in shaping the models constructed in support of the creation, maintenance and modification of the religious self do not appear so much in literary transmission but in communication; in creative (re)connecting of themes and paradigms in various performative contexts, resulting in new meanings given to existing traditions.

### **3. Reception of the Maccabean Martyrs in Jewish and Christian Historiography**

This is the first part of the analysis of reception-history of the Maccabean martyrs. It is limited to the sources which I consider historiographical. That implies sources which attempt a historiography or historical narration with concern to the Maccabean Revolt.<sup>121</sup> Analyzing the reception within the historiographical sources only, I am able to differentiate between postivie and negative reception: that means that I discuss also those historiographies which seem not to contain a reception, in order to understand the reasons why the Maccabean martyrs have been left out.

However, before investigating the acquired share of the martyrs in Jewish and Christian historiography, the readers are introduced to the martyr narratives as they appear in 2 Maccabees. The introduction aims at providing grounds for the analysis of the reception of the Maccabean martyrs in the historiographical sources, as the analysis is limited to the depiction of their martyrdoms within the historical context given to the martyrdoms in 2 Maccabees, that is, the Maccabean Revolt.<sup>122</sup>

The readers will find a list of sources in Chapter 1.3., in a chronological order. In the analyses, the sources are divided in three groups: the Books of Maccabees, Jewish historiography, represented by the works of Josephus; and

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<sup>120</sup> Räsänen 2001, 273.

<sup>121</sup> For more about the methodology and the nature of historiographical sources, see Ch. 2.1.1.

<sup>122</sup> Due to this limitation, the Rabbinic versions of the Maccabean martyrdoms are excluded from this analysis, as they situate the martyrdoms in the context of Roman persecutions of first and second centuries CE.

Christian-initiated historiography. In the conclusion, the peculiar cases of 5 *Maccabees*, the Old Slavonic version of Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*, and a Jewish medieval chronicle *Josippon* are also taken into account.<sup>123</sup>

### 3.1 The First Appearance

The Maccabean martyrdoms are first depicted in 2 Maccabees, a book which deals “with the deed of Judas Maccabeus”,<sup>124</sup> connected to the destiny of the Jewish nation, temple and religion.<sup>125</sup> In the course of events, 2 Maccabees 6 and 7 form a rather independent unit consisting of two stories of martyrdom: that of an old scribe Eleazar<sup>126</sup> and that of seven brothers.<sup>127</sup> The martyr narratives could function independently of each other, but it seems that the author has linked them together on purpose.<sup>128</sup> The characters in Chapters 6-7 are also in no way related to Judas Maccabeus or other Jewish characters with military relevance in the Maccabean Revolt, whose story begins in 2 Maccabees 8:1. Thus, the martyr accounts seem relatively independent of each other and also of the book as a whole.

The author provides his readers with a general historical introduction to the martyrdoms: they took place under a religious coercive program of foreign rulers, which persuaded the Jews to forsake the laws of their ancestors. The Jews resigned to the extent that the temple was polluted. The compulsion was organized by forcing the Jews to partake in the sacrifices during the feast of Dionysus and those who would not “change over to Greek customs” would be killed.<sup>129</sup> Before the detailed accounts of Eleazar and the seven brothers, the author provides his readers with instructions on how to read the martyrdoms:

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<sup>123</sup> These are not targeted to a profound analysis, as I have only had access to the translations of the two latter. In addition, the dates and origins of the works are often very obscure and thus they can contribute to the analysis only as far as their thematic contents are in concern.

<sup>124</sup> Grintz 2007b, 317.

<sup>125</sup> According to the book itself, it accounts for Judas Maccabeus and his brothers, the purification of the great temple, the dedication of the altar, the wars against Antiochus Epiphanes and his son Eupator, the “appearances that came from heaven to those who fought bravely for Judaism” and “regained possession of the temple famous throughout the world”, “liberated the city”, and “re-established the laws that were about to be abolished”; 2 Macc 2:19-23. According to van Henten, it is “a liberation history of the Jewish temple-state”; van Henten 1997, 212..

<sup>126</sup> 2 Macc 6:18-31.

<sup>127</sup> 2 Macc 7:1-40. The death of the mother of her martyred sons is reported in verse 7:41.

<sup>128</sup> Doran 1980, 190-1. Also Goldstein has noted that the martyrdoms were originally separate; Goldstein 1984, 283. For the linking verses, see “It happened also [...]” (2 Macc 7:1) and the concluding verse of 2 Macc 7 (7:42), which, according to Doran, includes a reference to both Eleazar and the brothers.

<sup>129</sup> 2 Macc 6:7-9. 2 Macc 6:1-6 is a description of the generalized events which led to the persecution. In 6:10-11, the author refers to several occasions of martyrdom. 2 Maccabees is presumably the earliest texts which juxtaposes Judaism and Hellenism; Grintz 2007b, 318. See e.g. 2 Macc 4:13.

firstly, one should bear in mind that God allows the persecution not to destroy but to discipline his people, and secondly, be sure that God never forsakes his own people.<sup>130</sup> As the successful Maccabean Revolt is initiated immediately after the martyr narratives, the readers are left with the impression that the martyrs are “disciplined” on account of the collective sin of their nation and that their devotedness to God exemplify trust in God’s mercy.<sup>131</sup>

Eleazar is executed because of his loyalty and obedience to the Jewish laws, more precisely, because he refuses to eat the meat sacrificed to idols, that is, pork.<sup>132</sup> Antiochus IV Epiphanes has initiated the persecution, but Eleazar’s immediate executors remain anonymous; yet, it is suggested that Eleazar knew them and that there might have been certain Jews among them.<sup>133</sup> There seems to have been a difference of opinions in the interpretation of the law among the Jews involved in Eleazar’s martyrdom: some think the Law could be compromised under severe circumstances but Eleazar disagrees.<sup>134</sup> The purpose of Eleazar’s martyrdom is made explicit in his words: he aims at leaving behind an example of nobility and a memorial of courage, not only to the young but to the nation as a whole.<sup>135</sup>

The composition of the martyrdoms of the youths reflects a different occasion since the king himself, Antiochus, is present in the events.<sup>136</sup> Apart from Antiochus, all the other characters remain anonymous. Each of the brothers, from the first until the sixth, engages in a dialogue with the king and the pattern of narration is repetitive: enforcement is declared upon the youth and he resists; the king becomes increasingly furious and commands the tortures to begin; from the midst of the horrors of frying pans and scalping, the youth addresses the king and then he dies. The mother and those brothers still alive keep witnessing the martyrdoms.<sup>137</sup> Only before the execution of the last one, the mother’s role

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<sup>130</sup> 2 Macc 6:12-17.

<sup>131</sup> Also the martyrs themselves understand their function in this way; 2 Macc 7:18, 32-33.

<sup>132</sup> 2 Macc 6:18; in 6:21, it is specified as a sacrificial meal.

<sup>133</sup> 2 Macc 6:21. This may refer to the sin of the nation that they were siding with the foreign rulers against their co-patriots.

<sup>134</sup> 2 Macc 6:21-22.

<sup>135</sup> τοῖς δὲ νέοις ὑπόδειγμα γενναῖον καταλειπῶς εἰς τὸ προθύμως καὶ γενναίως ὑπὲρ τῶν σεμνῶν καὶ ἁγίων νόμων ἀπευθαντιζέειν. τοσαῦτα δὲ εἰπὼν ἐπὶ τὸ τύμπανον εὐθέως ἦλθεν; 2 Macc 6:28.

<sup>136</sup> In 2 Macc 6-7, Antiochus is mentioned by name only in the dialogue which takes place between him and the mother (7:24-29); for the rest of the time, he is referred to as the king. In the rest of the book, he is often referred to, e.g. when he enters “the most holy temple in the world” (5:15).

<sup>137</sup> 2 Macc 7:5-6, 21. The mother and the brothers encourage each other with a biblical quotation (2 Macc 7:6; it relates to a verse in the Song of Moses in Deut 32:36).

becomes more active, when she is called in by Antiochus, who wants her to persuade her last son to save himself. She seemingly follows the order and addresses her son but in contrast to Antiochus' request she exhorts him to martyrdom in their native language.<sup>138</sup> After this, the boy addresses the king boldly, by giving a summary of all the previous speeches of his brothers: the purpose of their deaths is to appeal to God "to show mercy on soon to our nation", to make Antiochus "confess that he alone is God", and, through the sufferings, "to bring to an end the wrath of the Almighty that has justly fallen on our whole nation".<sup>139</sup> The closure of events is very sudden and brief. It is reported that the king falls into a rage, the last of the brothers dies, and the mother dies last of all, after her sons.<sup>140</sup>

In comparison to Eleazar, the brothers emphasize the role of their ancestors in their motivation to die.<sup>141</sup> Thereby, their use of the ancestral language, Hebrew, is highlighted.<sup>142</sup> They were also compelled to partake the unlawful sacrifice but, by the martyrdom of the last one, the command is simply to abandon "the ways of the ancestors".<sup>143</sup> The mother's role is specified with a comparison to Eleazar, whom she outruns in memorability and excellence.<sup>144</sup> Her actions are compared with that of man's as she gives a speech of encouragement to her sons.<sup>145</sup>

The analysis of the reception of the Maccabean martyrs in historiography focuses on the effects of the martyrs' deaths, that is, on how (or if) the martyrdoms make a difference in history. In 2 Maccabees, the conviction of the brothers on the matter, made explicit by the last of them, indicates a great effect, that they turned the destiny of their people. Both Goldstein and van Henten agree with the boy as they claim that, in the context of 2 Maccabees, the martyrdoms function as a turning point of events, inspiring the Maccabean Revolt and winning over the wicked ruler and purifying not only the temple but the whole nation.<sup>146</sup> However, there are oppositional evaluations, according to which the martyrdoms

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<sup>138</sup> 2 Macc 7:24-29.

<sup>139</sup> 2 Macc 7:30-38.

<sup>140</sup> 2 Macc 7:39-41.

<sup>141</sup> 2 Macc 7:2, 24, 30, 37.

<sup>142</sup> 2 Macc 7:8, 21.

<sup>143</sup> Compare 2 Macc 7:1 with 7:24.

<sup>144</sup> 2 Macc 7:21-23. Ὑπεραγόντως δὲ ἡ μήτηρ θαυμαστή καὶ μνήμης ἀγαθῆς ἀξία; 2 Macc 7:20.

<sup>145</sup> φωνῆ γενναίῳ πεπληρωμένῃ φρονήματι καὶ τὸν θῆλυον λογισμὸν ἄρσενι θυμῷ διεγείρασα; 2 Macc 7:21.

<sup>146</sup> Goldstein 1984, 303; van Henten 1997, 212.



remain separate and thus their effect is irrelevant in 2 Maccabees as a whole,<sup>147</sup> or, as Orliński defines, the martyrs were perhaps rebellious but the revolutionary importance was that of Judas and his companions, who really arose to resist.<sup>148</sup>

### **3.2. The Books of Maccabees**

As the title of 2 Maccabees indicates, there are several books known by the title Maccabees. Although the origins of the name remain obscure, its connection to Judas Maccabeus and the Maccabean Revolt should be noted. Four of the books (1-4 Maccabees) are connected to the apocryphal books and the Christian canons,<sup>149</sup> and three of them (1, 2 and 4) concern themselves with the historiography of the Maccabean Revolt.<sup>150</sup> In this chapter, historiographical approaches of these books to the Maccabean Revolt are analyzed. The aim is to define the roles and the historiographical importance of the Maccabean martyrs in each of the books and conclude with a comparative analysis.

In 1, 2 and 4 Maccabees, the variations in the focus of events is wide-ranging: at one extreme, 4 Maccabees is fully committed to narrating the martyrdoms and explains about other historical events only to the extent needed to set up the historical scene for them; and at the other, 1 Maccabees gives only a general description of the religious persecution of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, without identifying any of those martyred.<sup>151</sup> 1 and 2 Maccabees are considered independent of each other and probably contemporaries, dating from the early first century BCE.<sup>152</sup> They differ both with regard to the sources they have used and the addressees they were written to.<sup>153</sup> 4 Maccabees is generally considered a late-first or early-second century text, written by an anonymous Diaspora-Jew with a

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<sup>147</sup> Shepkaru 2006, 17, 19.

<sup>148</sup> Orliński 1974, 241-2.

<sup>149</sup> *5 Maccabees*, which also re-writes the history of the Maccabean Revolt, is not included in any antique authoritative lists of canons.

<sup>150</sup> Gibson 2007, 316.

<sup>151</sup> Also the time span varies. The narrowest is found in 4 Macc, as it opens with the corruption of the high priests, co-operation with Antiochus, and defilement of the temple, but the whole survey ends when the accounts begin (4 Macc 3:18-5:3). 2 Macc begins in a manner similar to 4 Macc (2 Macc 3:1-5:27) but extends further, as it accounts for the successful battles led by Judas Maccabeus (2 Macc 8-15). Judas' death is not included in the book, nor is the accession of his brother. Time-wise, the most extensive historiography is provided by 1 Macc which begins with a historical summary from Alexander to Antiochus Epiphanes (1 Macc 1:1-10), describes the reign of Antiochus and his followers and the Maccabean Revolt in detail all the way until the establishment of the Hasmonean state (1 Macc 1:16-15:40). The conflicts over Hellenization are touched in 1 Macc 1:11-15 and the religious persecution is accounted for in 1 Macc 1:41-64.

<sup>152</sup> 1 Macc should have been written by 90 BCE the latest, and 2 Macc between 78/7-63 BCE; Godlstein 1986, 83. 1 and 2 Maccabees are contemporaries, composed ca. 100BCE, but made of separate sources; Flusser 2009, 114; Grntz 2007b, 318.

<sup>153</sup> Grntz 2007a and b, 316-8. 1 Macc was originally written in Hebrew and 2 Macc in Greek.

high Hellenistic education.<sup>154</sup> Its accounts of martyrdom and the brief historical introduction to the persecution are probably based on 2 Maccabees.<sup>155</sup> Next, I discuss the historical setting of the Maccabean Revolt and make a comparison between its two major accounts, 1 and 2 Maccabees. Thereafter, I make a comparison between 2 and 4 Maccabees, namely, to what extent and how the historiography of 2 Maccabees is repeated in 4 Maccabees. As noted above, the focus of the analyses is limited onto the role given to the Maccabean martyrs in the course of history; the aim is to find out, if their martyrdoms were understood effective and, if so, in which ways.

### 3.2.1. The Heroes of 1 and 2 Maccabees

In the 160s BCE, during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, there was a revolt in Judea, led by a military hero called Judas Maccabeus who was the son of a priest called Mattathias.<sup>156</sup> Judas and his companions were surprisingly successful and their military efforts resulted in a period of Jewish independence in Judea.<sup>157</sup> The period is known as the Hasmonean dynasty, for Mattathias and Judas belonged to the Hasmonean family, and it lasted until the Romans arrived in 37 BCE.<sup>158</sup> Those who consider the Jews to have been on the edge of extinction before 160s BCE, give the Hasmoneans (supra-)historical credit for uniting the Jews nationally in times of extreme difficulties.<sup>159</sup> Besides the military and political merits of the Hasmoneans, there were theologically problematic features in their actions: the Hasmonean rule combined the religious and political authorities to the extent that one person was both the high priest and the king. Such an arrangement was constantly criticized by the Pharisees, who were the strongest oppositional voice during the Hasmonean era.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> DeSilva 2006, xiv, xii-iii; Rajak 2001 (1997), 111-2.

<sup>155</sup> Rajak 2001 (1997), 111; for a discussion on the literary dependence of 4 Macc on 2 Macc, see van Henten 1997,70-3.

<sup>156</sup> 1 Macc 2:1-5; 2 Macc does not mention Mattathias by name.

<sup>157</sup> Stern & Bayer 2007, 446.

<sup>158</sup> The name "Hasmonean" is not mentioned in the Books of Maccabees but Josephus uses it in A.J. 12.6.1; LCL 365, 136 (265); Stern & Bayer 2007, 446.

<sup>159</sup> Such a view of history is represented e.g. by Orlinsky in his article, *The Story of Hanukkah - What Really Happened?*, in which Hanukkah is connected to the religious persecution in Judea and the Hasmonean family stands as "a symbol of a faith triumphant, in the midst of the fight for establishing a true religious freedom"; Orlinsky 1974, 239, 244. More recently, Flusser has written in a similar tone. Alike, Hanukkah, launched by Judas Maccabeus who purified the temple and witnessed the miracle of the light, develops into a religio-national festival of perseverance and survival; see "*What is Hanukkah?*": *The Historical setting of the Hasmonean Temple Dedication* and also *Did the Jewish people obscure the memory of the Maccabees in the Middle Ages?* in Flusser 2009.

<sup>160</sup> Stern & Bayer 2007, 446.

1 and 2 Maccabees are the two most important contemporary sources of the Maccabean Revolt, both of them having been composed in its aftermath.<sup>161</sup> 1 Maccabees mentions the religious persecution and that some died a martyr's death, but the focus of the book seems to be on the military efforts of the Hasmoneans and the history of the independent state.<sup>162</sup> In 2 Maccabees, on the contrary, the focus is on the destiny of Jerusalem and the temple. Apart from Judas, none of the Hasmoneans are mentioned in it. In 1 Maccabees, it is "Judas and his brothers" who fight but in 2 Maccabees the expression is often replaced with "Judas his companions/men".<sup>163</sup>

The approaches to history are different: 1 Maccabees, unlike 2 Maccabees, "does not contain explanations of historical or personal psychological motivation, of the sort usually found in the works of the contemporary Greek historians", or such as 2 Maccabees;<sup>164</sup> and 2 Maccabees is "written in the style of Greek historians: in ornate language, rich in idioms and poetic metaphors, and in expressions filled with pathos, drama, and rhetoric, stirring the reader" and is "full of various stories of miraculous events".<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, 1 Maccabees is devoted to the history of the Hasmoneans,<sup>166</sup> while 2 Maccabees narrates the history between two major events: the defilement of the temple in the beginning and the purification of the temple in the end.<sup>167</sup> As the focuses of the books show, they both provide an interpretation of history already in the choice of their focus of events.

In his commentaries on both 1 and 2 Maccabees, Goldstein has suggested that the two books are not only different or contradictory but intentionally oppositional to each others in their approach to the historical events: 1 Maccabees is pro-Hasmonean, whereas 2 Maccabees is clearly contra. This opposition is made manifest throughout the books, in their length, focus and scope.<sup>168</sup> One

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<sup>161</sup> Goldstein 1986, 83; Flusser 2009, 114; Grintz 2007b, 318; Mendels 2009, 41-2. For my analysis, it is enough to know they were coeval and composed in different circles.

<sup>162</sup>The real subjects of the books are marked, for example, in the narration of the persecution, after which the focus is zoomed onto certain individuals, whose actions the book accounts for (1 Macc 1:62-2:2). 1 Macc 5:62 shows sympathy to the Hasmoneans and, as opposed to 2 Macc, there are no accounts of supernatural interventions; Grintz 2007b, 317-8.

<sup>163</sup> His brothers are referred to twice only; 2 Macc 2:19; 8:22.

<sup>164</sup> Grintz 2007a, 317.

<sup>165</sup> Grintz 2007b, 318. of the intervention of heavenly creatures, directly (by angels) and indirectly (by signs in heaven and on earth presaging evil).

<sup>166</sup> Grintz 2007a, 317. See e.g. 1 Macc 5:62.

<sup>167</sup> The references to the temple in 2 Macc are abundant and concludes with a notion of the temple, as "they all, looking to heaven, blessed the Lord who had manifested himself, saying, "Blessed is he who has kept his own place undefiled!"; 2 Macc 15:34. See also Goldstein 1984, 12.

<sup>168</sup> Goldstein 1986, 4-6.

distinctive difference between the two is that 2 Maccabees gives a personal and detailed account of the martyrs who play a historically significant role and are in no way connected to the Hasmoneans, while 1 Maccabees deals with the period of persecution without glorifying any particular martyrs. In 2 Maccabees, it is the effect of their deaths which first appeals to God.<sup>169</sup> The martyrs' deaths are ineffective in 1 Maccabees and the military efforts are secondary in 2 Maccabees.<sup>170</sup> Finally, Goldstein concludes that the martyrs of 2 Maccabees are fashioned into heroes in order to challenge the exclusively Hasmonean achievements.<sup>171</sup>

Goldstein's interpretation, even if it is very interesting, has certain weaknesses which have to be noticed. First of all, Goldstein believes that both the authors were familiar with the historiography of Jason of Cyrene and modified it to better suit their own purposes.<sup>172</sup> However, as I have noted, there is no reference to that historiography outside 2 Maccabees, which makes it a rather hypothetic common source.<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, the question of propagandistic tendencies is not an easy matter. If 1 Maccabees is considered pro-Hasmonean, its ideal intended audience, the Hasmonean circles, can be reconstructed. However, if the audience of 2 Maccabees is defined only as "anti-Hasmonean", that is, only as a negation of that of 1 Maccabees' audience, the definition does not imply any specific group. As a matter of fact, it might not even be considered propagandistic on its own, without its relation to 1 Maccabees. Theoretically, the Pharisees could qualify as the specific audience of 2 Maccabees, because were critical of the Hasmoneans and presumably interested in the temple purity.<sup>174</sup> However, this is only theoretically, and Goldstein himself does not suggest so.

Because of these weaknesses of Goldstein's view, I have decided to reject his his main argument which is that 1 and 2 Maccabees are intentionally oppositional, as the former propagates the Hasmonean view over historiography

<sup>169</sup> Goldstein 1986, 8-9. Shepkaru points out the same difference between 1 and 2 Macc, claiming that it is "the combatant innocent" who sets the ideal in 1 Macc, while martyrdom is considered passive and thus rejected; Shepkaru 2006, 19.

<sup>170</sup> Goldstein 1984, 8-9, 12, 17.

<sup>171</sup> Indeed, Goldstein believes that the position of the Hasmonean family is among the main interests of the author's propadanga; Goldstein 1984, 12. He is greatly concerned about the oppositional party, asking, against whom he writes, and builds his introduction to the book repeatedly with the Hasmonean propagandist as "on the other side"; Goldstein 1984, 16, 18-19.

<sup>172</sup> See *Sources of First and Second Maccabees no longer extant* in Goldstein 1976, 90-103, esp. pp. 102-3.

<sup>173</sup> 2 Macc explicitly builds on it and claims to be an abridgement of it (2 Macc 2:23); however, Jason of Cyrene or his work is never mentioned outside 2 Macc; Borchardt 2010.

<sup>174</sup> Grntz has noted that the views of 2 Macc are close to those of the Pharisees; however, it is not possible to tell if the book itself is of Pharisean origin; Grntz 2007b, 318.

and the latter puts effort in taking away the focus from the Hasmoneans. Thereby, I wish to highlight that I would not count on the historiography of Jason of Cyrene as much as he does. Furthermore, I think there is a difference between a use of propagandistic elements and a thorough intentional opposition.

However, I find Goldstein's approach interesting, as it highlights the questions of the effects in historiography. In addition, I believe it is possible that 1 and 2 Maccabees are not only different but mutual rivals. I can further test Goldstein's proposition, taking it as a hypothesis, as I now turn to investigate the Jewish reception of the martyr's first in 4 Maccabees and then in Josephus' works. Indeed, having Goldstein's hypothesis in mind, I find it intriguing to notice that the efficiency of the martyrs' deaths is nothing but emphasized and elaborated in 4 Maccabees, and exactly at the expense of the Hasmoneans; for, in 4 Maccabees, no other heroes of the Maccabean Revolt are identified at all apart from the martyrs.

### 3.2.2. Re-writing of 2 Maccabees in 4 Maccabees

If the function and role of the martyrs can be debated in 2 Maccabees, the case of 4 Maccabees is quite the opposite. The martyrs are with no doubt the main characters of 4 Maccabees. Their centrality is reflected in the very composition of the book. By the comparative table below, I wish to demonstrate how the contents of 2 and 4 Maccabees overlap and furthermore, how the martyrdoms dominate 4 Maccabees. The thematic focus, but also the mere extent things are dealt with in the books, reveal their different characteristics and focuses.

	<b>2 Maccabees</b>	<b>4 Maccabees</b>
<b>Introductions</b>	1:1-2:32	1:1-3:18
<b>Historical narration of corruption and conflict</b>	3:1-4:50	3:20-4:20
<b>defilement of the temple</b>	5:1-27	4:20
<b>persecution in general</b>	6:1-17	4:21-5:3
<b>Martyrdoms of Eleazar</b>	6:18-31	5:1-13
his speeches	6:24-27, 30	5:6-12, 14-38; 6:17-22, 27-29
phil. reassertions <sup>175</sup>	6:31	6:30-35; 7:1-23
<b>the brothers</b>	7:1-40	8:1-12:19
their speeches; the first	7:2	9:29-32
the second	7:8-9	9:1-9, 15, 17-18, 23-24
the third	7:11	10:2-4, 10-11
the fourth	7:14	10:14-16, 18-21
the fifth	7:16	11:2-8, 12

<sup>175</sup> By philosophical reassertions, I mean sections in which the author reflects on the martyr narrative in relation to his philosophical theme, interrupting the narration of the actual events.

the sixth	7:18-19	11:14-16, 20-27
the seventh	7:30-38	12:8, 11-18
all of them	7:6	13:9-18
phil. reassertions	-	13:1-7, 19-27; 14:1-10
<b>the mother</b>	7:41	17:1
her speeches	7:6, 22-23, 27-29	16:16-23; 18:7-19
phil. reassertions	(7:20)	14:11-20; 15; 16:1-14; 17:2-6
<b>Historical narration of</b>		
the armed battles	8:1-36, 10:14-11:13, 12:1-36, 13:1-15:36	-
the purification of the temple	10:1-8	-
<b>Conclusions</b>	15:37-39	17:2-18:15; 18:20-23 <sup>176</sup>

As the table shows, the author of 4 Maccabees is most devoted to his main characters: he has expanded the descriptions of their martyrdoms with accounts of their speeches and speculations on their inner trials; his narration is constantly interrupted with philosophical insertions in which the main ideas of his philosophical introduction are repeated. He provides the martyrdoms with both a philosophical and a historical introduction. To discuss the martyrdoms so profoundly, the author has to compensate by cutting down the historical material a lot. In the analysis of historiography, the interesting part is to see what the author of 4 Maccabees has omitted, what he has considered worth preserving, and what he has kept but modified. Hence in this chapter, I will mainly adhere to the historical introduction of the book, which I will compare with 2 Maccabees.<sup>177</sup>

In 4 Maccabees, the trials of the martyrs are depicted with military and athletic figures of speech.<sup>178</sup> As a result, the memory of the Maccabean Revolt as a whole is repressed. The competition between the martyrs and the rebels about the effective role in history seems to have taken place already in the author's head. Judas Maccabeus (or anybody among his family or troops, for that matter) is not referred to even incidentally in 4 Maccabees. The implied message is clear: the nation did not need the military heroes.

<sup>176</sup> 4 Maccabees, or at least the conclusive paragraphs in it, are often considered homiletical; Rajak 2001 (1997), 113; Amir 2007, 319.

<sup>177</sup> Historical introduction in 4 Macc 3:20-4:26; and the epilogue in 18:1-5. The author is generally content with a summary of his source, 2 Macc, although it should be noted that he seems to have been quite flexible in its use. DeSilva has collected his "errors", in comparison to 2 Macc; DeSilva 2006, 112, 116. This is not to exclude the option that he may have had other historical sources in addition to 2 Macc.

<sup>178</sup> van Henten 1997, 235.

At this point, one cannot avoid asking, if the author was “anti-Hasmonean” and thus deliberately follow 2 Maccabees’ historiography?<sup>179</sup> The absent parts are difficult if not impossible to analyze and thus one can only speculate about the author’s attitude towards the Hasmonean efforts in the history of the Jewish people. There is, however, one verse in the historical introduction which may give us a hint: describing the degeneracy of the Jewish leaders, the nation’s “form of government in complete violation of the law”, the author blames it onto a man whom Antiochus had designated as both the high priest and the political leader.<sup>180</sup> Such a claim is not made explicit in 2 Maccabees,<sup>181</sup> but, according to Stern & Bayer, the Hasmonean dynasty, at the peak of its power (ca. 100 BCE), strove for establishing absolute authority by combining the authorities of the king and high priest.<sup>182</sup> In sum, it is not difficult to associate the reference in 4 Maccabees with the criticism of the Hasmonean rule and therefore this one verse may indeed confirm Goldstein’s hypothesis which presumes anti-Hasmonean historiographical propaganda.

In both 2 and 4 Maccabees, the description of the historical events begins at an idyllic scene of peace and harmony. This is, according to both, a prevailing state when the Jews are obedient to God’s law.<sup>183</sup> The temple is there in the state of purity: the attempt to rob the temple treasury is reported in both accounts and so is the abolishment of the temple service.<sup>184</sup> However, the theological focus of 2 Maccabees, the stress on the importance of the temple, its purity and cult, is outstripped by the martyrs in 4 Maccabees. By the end of the book, when the crisis is solved, the destiny of the temple is no longer on the agenda in 4 Maccabees.<sup>185</sup> Instead of protecting the temple service, the martyrs seem to struggle for preserving the correct form of government, “the “ideal” state of affairs in the Jewish nation”, that is, that people live in obedience to the Torah and

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<sup>179</sup> I have not come across a study in which the relationship between 1 and 4 Macc is even theoretically discussed. I believe that the author of 4 Macc should have been aware of the Hasmonean history. However, 1 Macc is of Judean origin whereas 4 Macc is located in the Diaspora and that only may very well explain the differences of focuses.

<sup>180</sup> 4 Macc 4:19.

<sup>181</sup> In 2 Maccabees, the course of events is much more complex and the conflict made more explicit: there are several corrupted high priests who do not only act against the Jewish laws but also against each other; 2 Macc 3-4.

<sup>182</sup> Stern & Mayer 2007, 446. This project led them to an open conflict with the Pharisees.

<sup>183</sup> 2 Macc 3:1; 4 Macc 3:20.

<sup>184</sup> 4 Macc 3:20-4:14; 2 Macc 3:1-14. 4 Macc 4:22; 2 Macc 5:15; 6:2.

<sup>185</sup> In 4 Macc, the martyrs are not explicitly praised for purifying the temple or restoring the service; they only revived the observance of the law and stood out for their ancestral customs which of course generally could imply the temple service; 4 Macc 18:1-5. In 2 Macc, it is the temple which enjoys the restored order the most; 2 Macc 15:34.

thus are entitled to enjoy divine protection when needed.<sup>186</sup> According to DeSilva, it is this state of affairs, εὐνομία, which defines the character of the whole book:<sup>187</sup> it provided the ancestors with “profound peace,<sup>188</sup> it is the target of Antiochus’ oppressive decrees,<sup>189</sup> it is at the heart of the martyrs’ devotion,<sup>190</sup> and finally, it is the true weapon of the martyrs and provides them with the victory.<sup>191</sup>

My last point with regard to the effective role devoted solely to the martyrs in 4 Maccabees touches the question of εὐνομία and divine intervention. Again, DeSilva has pointed out a section in the historical introduction of 4 Maccabees, which the author uses in service of the main episode, that of martyrdom, by resembling a similar cosmic dynamics.<sup>192</sup> Pious Jews, offensive outsiders and God are involved in both the temple-robbing attempt and the martyrdoms. In the episode of temple-robbing, the divinity actively interferes, as it should, according to εὐνομία, when the nation of the Jews cries for help endangered:

“While the priests together with women and children were imploring God in the temple to shield the holy place that was being treated so contemptuously, and while Apollonius was going up with his armed forces to seize the money, angels on horseback with lightning flashing from their weapons appeared from heaven, instilling in them great fear and trembling.”<sup>193</sup>

DeSilva has interestingly pointed out that although the author condensed the original story a great deal, he left the reference to the priests with women and children in his account.<sup>194</sup> This reference, according to DeSilva, resembles our main characters, old priest Eleazar, the mother and her sons.<sup>195</sup> In this first

<sup>186</sup> DeSilva 2006, 119.

<sup>187</sup> DeSilva 2006, 113-4.

<sup>188</sup> “At a time when our ancestors were enjoying profound peace because of their observance of the law (διὰ τὴν εὐνομίαν) and were prospering [...]”; 4 Macc 3:20.

<sup>189</sup> “When, by means of his decrees, he had not been able in any way to put an end to the people’s observance of the law (καὶ ἐπεὶ κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον ἴσχυεν καταλύσαι διὰ τῶν δογμάτων τὴν τοῦ ἔθνους εὐνομίαν), but saw that all his threats and punishments were being disregarded”; 4 Macc 4:24.

<sup>190</sup> “You, father, strengthened our loyalty to the law through your glorious endurance (σύ, πάτερ, τὴν εὐνομίαν ἡμῶν διὰ τῶν ὑπομονῶν εἰς δόξαν ἐκύρωσας), and you did not abandon the holiness that you praised, but by your deeds you made your words of divine philosophy credible”; 4 Macc 7:9.

<sup>191</sup> “Because of them the nation gained peace, and by reviving observance of the law in the homeland they ravaged the enemy” (καὶ δι’ αὐτοὺς εἰρήνευσεν τὸ ἔθνος, καὶ τὴν εὐνομίαν τὴν ἐπὶ τῆς πατρίδος ἀνανεωσάμενοι ἐκπεπόρθηκαν τοὺς πολεμίους); 4 Macc 18:4.

<sup>192</sup> He remarks that, in the historical introduction, the author of 4 Maccabees focuses on two episodes, which he found in 2 Macc, which are the attempt to rob the temple (4 Macc 3:20-4:14; 2 Macc 3:4-4:6) and the actions of Jason, the high priest, who was designated as both the high priest and king; see the discussion above.

<sup>193</sup> 4 Macc 4:9-10.

<sup>194</sup> See 2 Macc 3:15-20 for the composition of those who prayed.

<sup>195</sup> DeSilva 2006, 117. 4 Macc 4:9: “While the priests together with women and children were imploring God in the temple to shield the holy place that was being treated so contemptuously [...]”. See also 4 Macc 4:25, about the women and their children against the tyrant; 2 Macc 6:10; 1 Macc 1:60-61.



episode, the prayers in the temple prove to be efficient enough to provoke God's active intervention: a miracle occurs and the defilement of the temple is prevented.<sup>196</sup> In the episode that follows, the temple is already defiled and thus the Jews are not deserving of help but need to act for themselves, and so the characters who have already set a pious example once, rise again.<sup>197</sup>

DeSilva concludes that the "priests, women and children" in both episodes are a historically effective army of Jews who, by witnessing for their loyalty to God, can provoke divine intervention; their example shows how the Lord of history can be persuaded to return to their side.<sup>198</sup> He thinks both of the episodes, the temple-robbery and the martyrdoms, follow a similar historical paradigm, a "pattern of God using a Gentile nation as the rod of divine chastening".<sup>199</sup> Thus, in both cases DeSilva gives credit to the active divine, as God is still capable of making Antiochus start the war against the Jews.<sup>200</sup>

In my opinion, there is a paradigmatic twist in the historical narration between the two episodes, due to the stress on the sole importance of the martyrs (and the lack of εὐνομία) in the latter. I believe that the episodes do not only parallel but also contrast each other. While in the first episode, the prayers in the temple are heard; in the second, the martyrs have to act on behalf of their nation. Only in this way, the martyrs restore the relationship between the Jewish people and their God (that is, εὐνομία). The role of God is curtailed into that of Providence: from a distance he keeps track, approves or disapproves but does not participate.<sup>201</sup> 4 Maccabees takes the importance of individual piety to extremes; the historical empowerment of pious individuals takes place not only at the expense of the military heroes or the temple but also at the expense of the role of the active divine in history.<sup>202</sup>

So, what was perhaps suggested in 2 Maccabees, is made very explicit in 4 Maccabees: the martyrs are presented as an active unit.<sup>203</sup> More importantly, they

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<sup>196</sup> The quote above; 4 Macc 4:9-10. The divine intervention corresponds with the overall style of 2 Macc, in which miracles occur and especially in connection to the temple; Grintz 2007b, 317.

See DeSilva 2006, 117-8.

<sup>197</sup> DeSilva 2006, 117, 122. See also 4 Macc 4:25.

<sup>198</sup> DeSilva 2006, 124.

<sup>199</sup> DeSilva 2006, 122. "So completely was the period of persecution under Antiochus read in light of Deuteronomy". See e.g. Deut 28.

<sup>200</sup> 4 Macc 4:21-26.

<sup>201</sup> Providence is repeatedly emphasized in 4 Maccabees; see, 9:24; 13:19; 17:22.

<sup>202</sup> It is the activity and passivity of the divinity, which is at stake, not the existence of the divinity. There are parallels in the Hebrew Bible, e.g. when Jacob somewhat mystically fights God in the night and wins him (over); Gen 32:23-33.

<sup>203</sup> They are all martyred at the same event and in each other's company; see e.g. 4 Macc 8:5.

form a unit on a “metaphysical”, universal level: the martyrs become a nation.<sup>204</sup> Dying for the Law, they bring over-historical profit to the whole Jewish community.<sup>205</sup> They defend and justify the Jewish way of living, triumph over the persecutor,<sup>206</sup> and leave the world in wonder.<sup>207</sup> The Hellenization motif is received in 4 Maccabees probably because it raises the issue of correct lifestyle, what the Jews should be like, not because of troubling greedy high priests.<sup>208</sup> Thus, the corrupted Jews, the Hellenizers, who are present in the historical introduction together with the temple, are forgotten towards the end of the book, as the Maccabean martyrs arise to symbolize the whole nation. In 2 Maccabees, the inner conflict is destructive indeed, as the high priests force the Hellenization over the Jews.<sup>209</sup> In contrast, in 4 Maccabees, Antiochus is the one who questions Eleazar’s ultimate perseverance, not the co-Jews.<sup>210</sup> In 4 Maccabees, the memory of Antiochus as a tyrant is embraced at the expense of another memory, that of the inner conflict and division; similarly, the Maccabean martyrs, as they present the whole nation in a universal setting, dissipate the memory of the inner conflict. In comparison to both 1 and 2 Maccabees, the in-group propagated by 4 Maccabees is larger and more difficult, actually impossible, to identify.<sup>211</sup>

As a conclusion, the martyrs thoroughly dominate 4 Maccabees’ approach to history. They are positioned as the only national heroes of the time. By omitting the whole military history related to the Maccabean Revolt, the author seems to be ignorant if not critical of it; at least, he shows to have disapproved of the Hasmonean form of government. Removing the focus from Judas and questions related to the temple service, he focuses more on the political order of the

<sup>204</sup> van Henten 1997, 212, 263-4. See also DeSilva 2006, 123.

<sup>205</sup> 4 Macc 17:10, 20-22.

<sup>206</sup> In 4 Macc, Antiochus is defeated two-foldly! In 17:23-24, he ends up in full admiration of the martyrs’ example; conversely, in 18:5, he is told to have earned punishment both temporal and eternal.

<sup>207</sup> 4 Macc 17:11-16.

<sup>208</sup> 4 Macc 4:21-26. According to DeSilva. “The Hellenizers’ attempts at “improvement” turn out to be effective only for the undermining of the peace and security of the nation; DeSilva 2006, 114. According to him, this is also the moral lesson of 2 Macc 4:16-17.

<sup>209</sup> 2 Macc 4:13.

<sup>210</sup> 4 Macc 5:5-14. In 2 Macc 6:21, it was Eleazar’s co-Jews.

<sup>211</sup> The propagandistic character of 4 Macc is evident and yet difficult to define. The author seems to have had a too difficult a choice to make in concluding the story with respect to the destiny of Antiochus: In first of the two versions he provides, Antiochus is eventually convinced by the Jewish way of life, admires them and elevates the Maccabean martyrs to be examples for his own soldiers and becomes unbeatable; 4 Macc 17:23-24. In the second, the author concludes that Antiochus was first defeated in the temporal life and then punished in the afterworld; 4 Macc 18:5. This indicates that the author could not decide between the motifs which his historiography should serve: the intensified cruelty punished while the Jews saved, or the triumph of the unchallengeable Jewish way of life, represented by the martyrs.

religious life of Jews: in his demonstration, the martyrs represent, preserve and restore εὐνομία, an order in obedience to the law. In Maccabees, the survival of the ancestral customs is a philosophical, spiritual and universal matter. The stress on the importance of the pious individuals – those who idealistically, explicitly, and determinedly represent the Jewish way of life – is so persuasive that the role of the Divinity in history is marginalized or at least de-personalized; the miraculous divine interventions, characteristic of 2 Maccabees, echo in the historical introduction of 4 Maccabees but have no role to play, in comparison to that of the martyrs.

The re-working of history in 4 Maccabees is so extensive that some, e.g. Rajak, no longer take the book as historiography; she regards their value social or educational. As the author of 4 Maccabees has shaped and recast his source(s) in ways which best fit his purposes and thus historiography is subordinate to his other goals; this makes the character of 4 Maccabees too universal and abstract to be considered historical.<sup>212</sup> I agree with her in that there is a strong paradigmatic and educative motif in the author's use of the martyrs and it is found at the strongest in the "non-historical" material of 4 Maccabees.<sup>213</sup> However, the events related are considered historical and the author chooses the Maccabean martyrs, as historical persons, to provide the best demonstration in support of his philosophical treatise.<sup>214</sup> Because of this, I believe it is valuable to read the book as historiography, too. The historiographical importance of 4 Maccabees cannot be embraced because of its factual correctness or historical extra information it provides. It is important as a historiographical work, because historical examples seem to have instrumental value for its author.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Such a *clung*, according to her, is given to them already in 2 Maccabees; Rajak 2001 (1997), 100-1. Also DeSilva notes that the author "has no "historical" agenda, but rather provides enough history to understand the dynamics of the martyrs' contest"; DeSilva 2006, 123.

<sup>213</sup> This material could be generally described as philosophical or theological; see the table in Ch.3.2.2., on p. 39-40, for the philosophical reassertions, exaltations of martyrdom, and also the introduction and conclusions of 4 Macc.

<sup>214</sup> 4 Macc 1:7-8, "I could prove to you from many and various examples that reason is dominant over the emotions, but I can demonstrate it best from the noble bravery of those who died for the sake of virtue, Eleazar and the seven brothers and their mother." According to DeSilva, such a form of argumentation is "a standard form of proof in classical and post-classical rhetoric", DeSilva 2006, 110.

<sup>215</sup> To borrow a concept from Barclay, I believe it deserves to be read as "apologetic historiography" of some sort; Barclay 1996, 357.

### 3.3. The Maccabean Martyrs in Jewish Historiography

Apart from the Books of Maccabees, there are very few Jewish historiographical texts covering the period of the Maccabean Revolt.<sup>216</sup> Thus, Josephus is highly important because he is considered practically the only source for the history of the era he depicts.<sup>217</sup> The analysis of the chapter is thus restricted to him, a first-century Jew who wrote in Greek for a Roman audience, who was born in Judea but composed all his works in Rome, where he lived in Diaspora after the Jewish War in 66-67 CE.<sup>218</sup> Among his well-known and famous books, I focus mainly on *Antiquitates Judaicae*, which is one of his later works, composed in the 90s CE.<sup>219</sup> As a comparative text, I read his first work, *Bellum Judaicum*, written in late 70s CE.<sup>220</sup> Both these works deal with the history of Jews including the Maccabean Revolt; *Bellum* is however focused on the Jewish revolt in the 60s CE and thus only paraphrases the history before the Common Era.<sup>221</sup>

Josephus' works are considered authentic and he was an eye-witness of many of the important historical events of his time, such as the Jewish War.<sup>222</sup> He was a member of the Jerusalem priestly aristocracy and got his education in Judea.<sup>223</sup> After the Jewish War, he moved to Rome and received the family name of his benefactors, the Flavian emperors Vespasian and Titus;<sup>224</sup> however, Barclay remarks that still in *Contra Apionem*, he identifies himself in many ways with his Judean origins.<sup>225</sup> Josephus is a very special source of information because, as Rajak has noted, we know comparatively much about him: he was renowned in his time and it is possible to contextualize his works.<sup>226</sup> Josephus did not oppose

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<sup>216</sup> Schalit 2007a, 441; Mendels 2009, 41-2.

<sup>217</sup> Rajak 2001, 137; Mescerskij 2003, 22. In addition, one may mention the obscure chronicle of Jason of Cyrene of which we know only through 2 Macc; and Justus of Tiberias, who was Josephus' contemporary and competing historian and to whom we have access only through Josephus himself; see "Justus of Tiberias as a Jewish Historian" and "Josephus and Justus of Tiberias" in Rajak 2001, 161-193.

<sup>218</sup> Schalit 2007a, 436; Barclay 1996, 346; Mescerskij 2003, 21.

<sup>219</sup> Barclay 1996, 346; Rajak 1983, 6.

<sup>220</sup> Mescerskij 2003, 22. I also make reference to *Contra Apionem* which was probably Josephus' latest work, composed after *A.J.* and in defense of it; Rajak 1983, 6; Barclay 1996, 361-2.

<sup>221</sup> Josephus summarizes the contents of *B.J.*, starting from Antiochus Epiphanes until the end of the Jewish War and the victory of the Romans, in Book 1.1-12; LCL 203, 10-17. The religious persecution and the Maccabean Revolt are touched in *B.J.* 1.1.1-6; LCL 203, 17-25. In comparison to *A.J.* or his other later works, *B.J.* is special as in it Josephus narrates more freely and independently of his sources but narrates by himself; Mescerskij 2003, 23.

<sup>222</sup> Schalit 2007a, 435.

<sup>223</sup> Rajak 2001, 138; Schalit 2007a, 435.

<sup>224</sup> Mescerskij 2003, 21.

<sup>225</sup> Barclay 1996, 347.

<sup>226</sup> "A native provincial voice of this kind is a most unusual phenomenon in antique literature, and we should make the most of it. [...] in Josephus we are dealing with a known author and man of

his surrounding cultures as strongly as the author of 2 Maccabees, for example. During his lifetime, he was situated between various contesting groups – Jews and Romans, Jewish aristocrats and the people – and shows remarkable capacity of readjustment.<sup>227</sup>

As the title of the chapter shows, I consider Josephus' works both historiographical and Jewish.<sup>228</sup> With regard to its Jewishness, the lack of early Rabbinic reception of Josephus should however be emphasized as much as the eagerness of its Christian reception. Christians took over his works from the second century onwards and kept preserving, translating and editing them.<sup>229</sup> Works of Josephus appear in Jewish use only in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, in connection with *Josippon*, a Jewish chronology.<sup>230</sup> The analysis further exposes that historiography never is neutral but has paradigmatic functions in various ways, which become explicit when enough information about the author, his context and intentions is available.

As there is no explicit reference to the Maccabean martyrs in Josephus, my analysis aims at investigating his “sense of Jewish history” and functions of martyrdom in it. First, I read the passages in *Antiquitates*, in which Josephus tells about the Maccabean Revolt most extensively, and analyze the lack of reception of the Maccabean martyrs in it. Thereafter, with the results of the analysis in mind, I try to construct his attitude towards martyrdom and his intentions as a historiographer by looking at his other works, too. The chapter aims at discovering the reasons for the lack of reception of the Maccabean martyrs in Josephus, and the possibility of their negative reception in his works.

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action, of known background and experience in the region (even if we come to learn of this from his own mouth), and known dates (more or less)”; Rajak 2001, 137.

<sup>227</sup> Rajak 2001, 139. Rajak shows that Josephus, in contrast to 2 Maccabees, uses the word “foreigner” not only about others, e.g. Greeks or Romans, but also about himself, when he addresses his audience; Rajak 2001, 142; in *B.J.* 1.pref.5; LCL 203, 10.

<sup>228</sup> Although Schalit does not give him much credit as a Jew or a historian: “As for his merit as an author, it may be said that in point of literary talent Josephus ranks among the leading writers in world literature”; “[n]ot so, however, is his merit as a historian”; as a Jew, “by some, he is regarded as a traitor”, while a “more charitable view contends that he was essentially a Pharisee who acted in conformity with this outlook”; Schalit 2007a, 440-1.

<sup>229</sup> Schalit 2007a, 441. In fact, he was made to function as a proof of the authenticity of Christianity exactly because his works linked with the era of earliest Christian sources; “It was Christian writers who extolled the historical authority of Josephus Flavius. Some, wishing to see him an ally, fabricated a legend according to which he allegedly accepted Christianity and actually ended his days as a Christian bishop”; Mescerskij 2003, 26.

<sup>230</sup> Mescerskij 2003, 27. A discussion on *Josippon* will follow in Ch. 3.5.

### 3.3.1. The Memory of the Maccabean Martyrs in *Antiquitates*

Josephus deals with the history of the Maccabean Revolt in *Antiquitates Iudaicae*, Book 12.<sup>231</sup> He has included a description of the religious persecution by Antiochus Epiphanes in the middle of the events. There are several factual and thematic links to the Books of Maccabees in Josephus' narration of the persecution.<sup>232</sup> In all likelihood, Josephus used 1 Maccabees as his major source for the period.<sup>233</sup> When his account of the persecution is compared with 1 Maccabees,<sup>234</sup> many similarities are found: according to Josephus, the king "forbade them [the Jews] to offer the daily sacrifices which they used to offer to God in accordance with their law". Thereupon, he "he compelled them to give up on their worship of their own God".<sup>235</sup> According to both 1 Maccabees and Josephus, the king appointed overseers who should assist in the enforcement of the oppression.<sup>236</sup> With regard to the martyrdoms, Josephus notes that "many of the Jews, some willingly, others through fear of the punishment which had been prescribed, followed the practices ordained by the king, but the worthiest people and those of noble soul disregarded him,<sup>237</sup> and held their country's customs of greater account than the punishment with which he threatened them if they disobeyed; and being on that account maltreated daily, and enduring bitter torments, they met their death" - - - "Indeed, they were whipped, their bodies were mutilated, and while still alive and breathing, they were crucified".<sup>238</sup>

In comparison to 1 Maccabees, Josephus seems to devote a bit more attention to the description of the persecution and he goes beyond the information provided by his main source, by mentioning the manner of the deaths of the persecuted Jews and calling them the worthiest and noble.<sup>239</sup> While this information is absent in 1 Maccabees, one might look at 2 Maccabees for closer parallels. Indeed, the description comes closer to the martyrdom of Eleazar in 2 Maccabees where

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<sup>231</sup> Book 12 begins from how Ptolemy took Jerusalem, explains about the competing high priests of the Jews and the nation divided into pro-Seleucids and pro-Ptolemaics. The national crisis is deepened by Antiochus Epiphanes who attains control over Jerusalem. The book is concluded with the death of Judas the Maccabee, after descriptions of his victorious battles; *A.J.* 12; LCL 365, 3-227.

<sup>232</sup> The persecution is accounted for in Josephus: *A.J.* 12.5.4; LCL 365, 126-132; 1 Macc 1:41-64; 2 Macc 6:1-7:41.

<sup>233</sup> Schalit 2007a, 439. Generally, Josephus paraphrases 1 Macc 1:14-13:42 (the last three chapters are omitted) in Books 12 and 13 in *A.J.* Only rarely there is additional information in *J.A.* which is not found in 1 but in 2 Macc; for more details, see notes in Marcus 1933; LCL 365, 122-37.

<sup>234</sup> 1 Macc 1:41-64.

<sup>235</sup> Josephus: *A.J.* 12.5.4; LCL 365, 131. The project was established by the king's commands to set up altars, on which swine was sacrificed daily, and to forbid circumcision; *A.J.* 12.5.4; LCL 365, 131. Cf. 1 Macc 1:42, 44-49.

<sup>236</sup> Josephus: *A.J.* 12.5.4; LCL 365, 131. 1 Macc 1:51.

<sup>237</sup> οἱ δὲ δοκιμώτατοι καὶ τὰς ψυχὰς εὐγενεῖς. The wording does not suggest a particular connection to 2 Macc.

<sup>238</sup> Josephus: *A.J.* 12.5.4; LCL 365, 131.

<sup>239</sup> 1 Macc 1:41, 62-63, "[m]any even from Israel gladly adopted" but "many in Israel stood firm" and "chose to die [...] and they did die".

Eleazar provides an example of nobility and, as a matter of fact, the words used by Josephus in plural in the quotation above are used in reference to Eleazar in 2 Maccabees 6.<sup>240</sup> Noting the similarities, Goldstein has suggested that besides 1 Maccabees Josephus knew also 2 Maccabees.<sup>241</sup> And, if had Josephus known 2 Maccabees, he should have been familiar with the Maccabean martyrs, too.

Anyways, it is indisputable that Josephus' account of the persecution does not include explicit references to any of the Maccabean martyrs. The first persons who are not only confronted with the persecutors but also identified are Mattathias and his sons in *Antiquitates* as well as 1 Maccabees: Mattathias, in the presence of his sons, resists the commands, does not abandon the law but attacks in defence and kills. His actions mark the beginning of the Maccabean Revolt. In both accounts, these are the main characters, portrayed in a heroic manner, and it is difficult to ignore the example they set.<sup>242</sup> They are given the active resistant role and they are remembered by name.<sup>243</sup>

In sum, Josephus' account acknowledges various groups of Jews which are interesting from the perspective of the causes and effects of the persecution: those who resisted Antiochus' commandments until their death, those who co-operated against their will and out of willingness; furthermore, those who started the revolt, Mattathias, his sons and Judas in particular, and later Judas and his men who form an organized army of rebels.<sup>244</sup> It seems that Josephus values the perseverance of the martyrs as they hold on to their religion but martyrdom does not bring about a change. This model of interpretation of historical events is in line with 1 Maccabees.

Earlier, I have paraphrased Goldstein's hypothesis, according to which 1 and 2 Maccabees are not only different from each other but oppositional and the martyrs in 2 Maccabees function as deliberate counter-heroes for Mattathias and his sons in 1 Maccabees, to propagate anti-Hasmonean policy.<sup>245</sup> Extending his hypothesis, Goldstein claims that Josephus can be shown to have confirmed the

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<sup>240</sup> Goldstein 1984, 285. Cf. ὑπομένοντες for "enduring" with ὑπομένοντας (2 Macc 6:20); τιμωρίας for "punishment" with τιμωρίαν (2 Macc 6:26); and μαστιγούμενοι for "being whipped" with μαστιγούμενος (2 Macc 6:30).

<sup>241</sup> As a matter of fact, Goldstein claims that Josephus knew 2 Macc very well but chose to quote 1 Macc; Goldstein 1984, 26-7. See also Goldstein 1976, 59-60, esp. note 23. In addition, there is an appendix on the matter in his commentary, in which he argues that Josephus' account and evaluation of Onias is written clearly to oppose to the positive view of 2 Macc; for the discussion, see Appendix XI *Josephus and the abridged history* in Goldstein 1984, 549.

<sup>242</sup> 1 Macc 2:15-26; Josephus: *A.J.* 12.6.2; LCL 365, 138-140.

<sup>243</sup> On 1 Macc, see Ch. 3.2.1.; on Josephus, see Rajak 2001 (1997), 125.

<sup>244</sup> *A.J.* 12.6.4; LCL 365, 146.

<sup>245</sup> On the competing historical views of 1 and 2 Macc, see Ch. 3.2.1.

pro-Hasmonean historiography, as he descends from the Hasmonean family and is “thoroughly Hasmonean”.<sup>246</sup> Regarding 1 Maccabees as the “pro-Hasmonean report” and 2 Maccabees as opposed to it, one should not have to wonder why Josephus used it over 2 Maccabees.<sup>247</sup> If one speculates, as Goldstein has argued, that Josephus had a choice to make, that he was also familiar with 2 Maccabees and its martyrdoms, his account of the religious persecution would then intentionally exclude the martyrs. Next, I will try to find out if this could hold.

Before his death, Mattathias gives a farewell speech to his sons.<sup>248</sup> It is easy to see that Josephus deviates from 1 Maccabees and writes another, a more philosophical speech instead.<sup>249</sup> He omits the biblical examples and the ancestral motif, which are emphasized in 1 Maccabees and is more concerned about the country’s customs and governmental form. In 1 Maccabees, there is a comparatively strong emphasis on glory, courage, and strength, while, in *Antiquitates*, the question is more spiritual.

Goldstein has claimed that Mattathias’ speech modified by Josephus shows interesting parallels with Eleazar in 2 Maccabees 6.<sup>250</sup> All the accounts – *Antiquitates*, 1 and 2 Maccabees – paint a picture of an old respectable dying man who leaves behind an example of courage. While Mattathias in 1 Maccabees emphasizes the covenant and biblical examples and does not exhort to martyrdom,<sup>251</sup> *Antiquitates* and 2 Maccabees have in common a strong emphasis on dying for the laws.<sup>252</sup> The most explicit common denominators in *Antiquitates* and 2 Maccabees 6 are the emphasis on the individual exemplarity of these men and their awareness of the purposeful memory they leave behind.<sup>253</sup> However, there are significant differences between the accounts which cannot be ignored even in the light of the similarities: Eleazar could have avoided his death, he is

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<sup>246</sup> According to Goldstein’s evaluation, Josephus is defensive of and loyal to the Hasmoneans throughout his works, even if he as a historian could recognize the faults of the Hasmonean dynasty; Goldstein 1976, 55-6. See also Schalit 2007a, 435; Rajak 1983, 16.

<sup>247</sup> Goldstein 1984, 5-6.

<sup>248</sup> Josephus: *A.J.* 12.6.3; LCL 365, 142-6; 1 Macc 2:49-64.

<sup>249</sup> See note c in Marcus 1933; LCL 365, 145.

<sup>250</sup> Goldstein claims Josephus’ speech written to Mattathias echoes Eleazar’s parting words in 2 Macc 6:30-31; Goldstein 1986, 285-6. I fail to see the parallels between those verses but it is his observations which have led me to compare the characters in the first place.

<sup>251</sup> 1 Macc 2:50-51.

<sup>252</sup> *A.J.* 12.6.3; LCL 365, 144. “Since you are my sons, I wish you to remain constant as such and to be superior to all force and compulsion, being so prepared in spirit as to die for the laws, if need be”; in my opinion, a parallel expression is found in 2 Macc 6:27-28: “Therefore, by bravely giving up my life now, I will show myself worthy of my old age and leave to the young a noble example of how to die a good death willingly and nobly for the revered and holy laws.”

<sup>253</sup> *A.J.* 12.6.3; LCL 365, 144; 2 Macc 6:27-28.



executed and, as a matter of fact, he talks to no one; he dies on a voluntary basis which gives the whole speech its distinctiveness. Mattathias, on the other hand, dies a natural death with his family around him, in a manner similar to the biblical patriarchs. Even if the form, or even words, were borrowed, the contents of the example the figures give are different: one should not forget that Mattathias is bringing about a war. Therefore, despite the resemblances, I cannot draw such close parallels between *Antiquitates* and 2 Maccabees 6 as Goldstein.

However, there are intriguing elements in Mattathias' speech in *Antiquitates*, which are not found in 1 Maccabees or 2 Maccabees 6. According to Josephus, Mattathias suggests that an act of heroic self-sacrifice would have an effect on God and turn his fortune back on their side. The same element is found in the purpose which the Maccabean brothers in 2 Maccabees 7 claim for their heroic deaths.<sup>254</sup> In addition, Goldstein makes a surprising observation, by claiming that Josephus, in writing the speech of Mattathias, seems to have been inspired by the mother of the Maccabean martyrs.<sup>255</sup> If his hypothesis stands up to a closer examination, it would indeed indicate that Josephus intentionally embraces the memory of Mattathias at the expense of the martyrs. The following comparison aims at testing it.<sup>256</sup>

**Antiquitates Judaicae**<sup>257</sup>

“[...] [my sons,] be mindful of the purpose of him who begot you and brought you up

[...]

but since you are my sons,  
I wish you to remain constant as such and  
to be superior to all force and compulsion,  
being so prepared in spirit as to die  
for the laws, if need be,<sup>258</sup>  
and bearing this in mind, that  
when the Deity sees you so disposed,

He will not forget you, but in admiration of  
your heroism will give them back to you again,  
and will restore you your liberty [...]

**2 Macc 7**

“My son, have pity on me. I carried you  
nine months in my womb and nursed you for  
three years and have reared you and brought you  
up to this point in your life and have taken care  
of you.” (7:27).

give up body and life for  
the laws of our ancestors, appealing to God  
to show mercy soon to our nation.” (7:37)

“The Lord is watching over us and in truth has  
compassion on us.” (7:6)

“Therefore, the Creator [...] will in his mercy  
give life and breath back to you again,”  
since you know forget yourselves for the sake of  
his laws.” (7:23)

<sup>254</sup> 2 Macc 7:37. See also *A.J.* 12.6.3.; LCL 365, 144, and 2 Macc 7:6.

<sup>255</sup> Goldstein 1984, 302.

<sup>256</sup> The underlined verses point to a parallel found, or to a clear deviation, which will be discussed later.

<sup>257</sup> Josephus: *A.J.* 12.6.3; LCL 365, 144.

<sup>258</sup> τὰς ψυχὰς οὕτω παρασκευασμένους, ὥστ' ἀποθανεῖν ὑπὲρ τῶν νόμων, ἂν δέη; this is what qualifies as martyrdom for Josephus and it will be further discussed below.

First, the functions of the father as the one who “begot you and brought you up” have clear parallel expressions in the mother’s words; Josephus has only left out the most feminine/maternal sides of parenting.<sup>259</sup> Secondly, the brothers explicate that they are ready to die for the laws and refer to God who is watching but also affected by their sacrifice. Lastly – and this shows Josephus’ reliance on 2 Maccabees perhaps most explicitly – her words echo in Mattathias’ promise of restoration: “(the Deity) will give them back to you again”.<sup>260</sup> In the context of *Antiquitates*, the pronoun αὐτούς has no clear object of reference; in 2 Maccabees, it is “body and life” (σῶμα καὶ ψυχὴν) which are to be given and “life and breath” which are to be returned (καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὴν ζωὴν ὑμῖν πάλιν ἀποδίδωσιν μετ’ ἐλέους).<sup>261</sup>

All in all, the comparison shows that the ethos of all the Maccabean martyrdoms is present in Josephus’ rewriting disguised in Mattathias’ spirit. The parallels may of course not necessarily imply Josephus’ intentional and violent wish to demolish the martyrs and replace them with more suitable national heroes but could simply show that he was impressed by the martyrs’ character and used them. Such a reception could indicate repression of their memory. In Josephus’ case, one can very well speculate a chance of negative reception, intentional exclusion and repression of the martyrs. Thus, it is worth asking, what motifs Josephus may have had in his refashioning of the Maccabean Revolt?

One motif, that of Josephus’ Hasmonean preferences, has already been suggested by Goldstein. In my opinion, Goldstein’s hypothesis overemphasizes one side of Josephus’ identity, his Hasmonean kinship, and fails to see the many-sidedness of his character. Josephus was also a Pharisee, well-educated in Greek and the Torah, a diplomat between the Judean Jews and the Roman rulers since his early adulthood and lived as a protégé in the emperor’s court in Rome.<sup>262</sup> Instead of its Hasmoneanism, he could have favored 1 Maccabees simply because it was first written in Hebrew and thus more authoritative in his eyes.<sup>263</sup> And since

<sup>259</sup> Josephus: *A.J.* 12.6.3; LCL 365, 144. 2 Macc 7:27. Goldstein 1984, 302.

<sup>260</sup> τῆς δ’ ἀρετῆς ἀγασάμενον ἀποδώσει πάλιν ὑμῖν αὐτούς

<sup>261</sup> Josephus: *A.J.* 12.6.3; LCL 365, 144. 2 Macc 7:23. See note b in Marcus 1933, LCL 365, 144; Goldstein 1986, 302-3.

<sup>262</sup> Schalit 2007a, 435-6; Rajak 1983, 1; Mescerskij 2003, 21; Barclay 1996, 346. Josephus is known to have had close ties to the Pharisees – a Jewish party which was always very critical of the Hasmonean dynasty. Now, if Josephus were so thoroughly Hasmonean as Goldstein claims, how does it go together with his education as a Pharisee?

<sup>263</sup> Josephus used “the Hebrews records” as his sources; Josephus: *A.J.* 1.5-6. According to the translator, we should not think that Josephus actually translated his sources, since Josephus depends extensively on the Alexandrian Greek Bible, the so-called Septuagint, in which “the later

Josephus does not mention his sources explicitly, it is therefore speculative to argue for his special commitments or attachments to either of them exclusively; he could have mentioned his sources if he was decided on the matter.

In my opinion, the comparison above shows that Josephus has devoted the Maccabean martyrs' memory to the Hasmoneans. Unlike Goldstein, I believe that he may have had other than Hasmonean-related reasons to moderate the role of the martyrs. I will test my view by presenting Josephus' character and his attitude towards martyrdom more generally. First, I investigate how martyrs would (not) fit the general purposes and paradigms of his works, regarded as Jewish apologetics and intended for non-Jewish audience. Secondly, I take a closer look at Josephus' personal attitude towards and experience of martyrdom.

### 3.3.2. Josephus' Way of Martyrdom

To approach the question of Josephus' relatedness to the Maccabean martyrs and martyrdom in general, one may take a look at his personal history of martyrdom. In *Bellum Judaicum*, he records a chain of events which took place at the end of his career as a military commander, during the Jewish war in the 60s in Jotapata.<sup>264</sup> While the town was taken by the Romans, Josephus managed to find refuge in a cave close by with his men. The Romans found them, persuaded them to surrender and Josephus decided to comply. However, his fellow Jews opposed to his intentions and threatened him by sword to meet death willingly instead of submitting to the Romans. Josephus responded by giving a convincing speech against martyrdom, "no; suicide is alike [...] an act of impiety towards God who created us".<sup>265</sup> But since his compatriots were "devoted to death", they would not listen to him but wanted to commit mass suicide. Then, suggested by Josephus, they drew a lot about the order of dying and finally Josephus "(should one say by fortune or by the providence of God?), was left alone with one other; and, anxious neither to be condemned by the lot nor, should he be left to the last, to stain his hand with the blood of a fellow-countryman, he persuaded this man also, under a pledge, to remain alive".<sup>266</sup> In this way, Josephus escapes a chance to die a

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historical books (1 Samuel to 1 Maccabees)" are included; see note a in Thackeray 1930, LCL 242, 4-5. In *A.J.* Books 12-13, in which Josephus deals with the Maccabean events, Josephus is not explicitly devoted to one particular source but shows he has had several sources; note a in Marcus 1933, LCL 365, 132-133.

<sup>264</sup> *B.J.* 3.7.33-3.8.7.

<sup>265</sup> Josephus: *B.J.* 3.8.5; LCL 203, 678-80 (369-370). The whole speech is found in 3.8.5; LCL 203, 678-682 (362-382). According to the translator, "[t]hat his companions would have tolerated the rhetorical speech on suicide is incredible"; note a in Thackeray 1927; LCL 203, 687.

<sup>266</sup> Josephus: *B.J.* 3.8.6-7; LCL 203, p684-6 (386-391).

glorious martyr's death and ends up in the hand of Romans, considered a traitor among his people.<sup>267</sup>

It was in Rome, where Josephus wrote *Antiquitates* to address “the whole Greek-speaking world” and embrace the “entire antique history and political constitution [of his nation], translated from the Hebrew records”.<sup>268</sup> Barclay believes the promotion of the reputation of Jews is characteristic of *Antiquitates*, which he defines as “apologetic historiography”.<sup>269</sup> Despite the well-known fact that Josephus was not in good relations with his contemporary Jews, his apologetic purposes, sympathetic of Jews and Judaism, are seemingly accepted among scholars. Basically, they presume that Josephus genuinely wished to win admiration for his people among his Greek-speaking non-Jewish audience, in defence of the reputation and rights of contemporary Jews.<sup>270</sup> However, acknowledging Josephus' disputed reputation as a Jew, one might ask: who he is apologetic for and whose reputation is he interested in? Is he writing on behalf of his people (only), or perhaps through himself?

Generally, Josephus' readers are under the impression that Josephus would have embraced martyrdom. He declares to be prepared himself to die in defense of Jerusalem.<sup>271</sup> However, Josephus was famous for his anti-martyrdom stance and thus he had to report about it (repeatedly) and try to defend himself.<sup>272</sup> Josephus' account and extensive explanations indicate that there was a tension between his ideals and actions: although he embraced the ideology of martyrdom, he could not

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<sup>267</sup> He was rejected by his contemporaries to the extent that even his magnificent works, apologetic of Judaism and Jewish heritage, were preserved only by the Christians; Schalit 2007a, 435, 440-1. Weitzman 2007, 88; Barclay 1996, 355.

<sup>268</sup> Josephus: *A.J.* 1.2; LCL 242, 5 (5-6).

<sup>269</sup> Barclay 1996, 357. Barclay defines it as such mainly due to Josephus' uncritical dependence on his main source, the Jewish Scriptures, which contrasts with his otherwise Greek historiographical ideals.

<sup>270</sup> Barclay 1996, 346; Goldstein 1976, 56; Mescerskij 2003, 25. Even if his difficult position between his co-patriots and benefactors is acknowledged and also the fact that his audience did not always receive his works the way he intended, his motivation to write is not questioned; Barclay 1996, 348-351, 361-2. Quite on the contrary, Josephus is praised for his sincerity and, according to Barclay's positive account, “his upper class social skills were put to the service of his national religious tradition”; Barclay 1996, 348; see also Goldstein 1976, 55. These exaltations can be apologized, especially when compensated with the negative reputation Josephus gained among his contemporary Jews.

<sup>271</sup> See, e.g. Josephus: *B.J.* 5.4.4; LCL 210, 332 (419) or *C. Ap.*, according to which “[o]bedience to that Law is something instilled into every individual from birth, and each is happy in the awareness that he might have to give up his life for it”; *C. Ap.* 1.8; LCL 186, 180 (42).

<sup>272</sup> The reasons for Josephus' choice may be speculated. In *B.J.*, he presents himself as a man with a mission from the heavens to stay alive, surrendering “not as a traitor but as thy minister”; *B.J.* 3.8.3; LCL 203, 674-6 (350-354). In his other books, he has given other excuses for his behavior; see Barclay 1996, 349-50.

live it.<sup>273</sup> Weitzman argues that it is the embracement of martyrdom, on one hand, and the unwillingness to die as a martyr when given a chance, on the other, which drove him to reconsider martyrdom. Thus, Josephus provides criticism of martyrdom and calls into question the rationality of such religiously-motivated behavior;<sup>274</sup> yet, he remains positive of the ideals of martyrdom, which according to Weitzman, is shown in an exceptional way in his re-writing of the Maccabean Revolt in *Antiquitates*, especially in the farewell speech of Mattathias, which I have investigated above.<sup>275</sup>

In accordance with Goldstein, Weitzman remarks that Josephus uses Mattathias' speech found in 1 Maccabees but he claims that Josephus "has subtly altered his source to allow for the possibility that the Maccabees do not actually have to die to achieve salvation". Weitzman suggests that Josephus develops another option, an alternative choice next to the violation of oneself, that is, the *preparedness in spirit to die* for the laws.<sup>276</sup> According to Josephus' modified martyrdom, already the preparedness would guarantee the restoration of liberty to practice of the law and therefore no deaths are required. Thus, "[i]n Josephus's version of the Maccabean Revolt, it is possible to achieve what the martyr does, to save the law, without actually dying for it: a mere willingness to die, *the exhibition of intent*, can have the same effect".<sup>277</sup> I consider Weitzman's proposal a brilliant explanation why Josephus chooses to receive the ethos and ideology provided by the Maccabean martyrs without glorifying the martyr acts themselves. In his preparedness to die, he can conveniently portray himself as comparable to Mattathias' example and as good as any of his sons, while his preparedness was not quite comparable with that of the martyrs, as his personal history shows.

In sum, there is no explicit reception of the Maccabean martyrs in Josephus historiography of the Maccabean Revolt. However, Josephus' wording reflects the

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<sup>273</sup> However, Rajak believes that Josephus "will scarcely have understood his great opportunity for suicide at Jotapata as a valid occasion for a martyr's death" and concludes that, in his historical writing, the true martyrs are Jewish deviants and rebels, not the ones who die; Rajak 2011 (1997), 125. Rajak has also given an evaluation of Josephus's opinion of martyrdom, in which she claims that it is an essential part of Josephus' definition of Judaism; Rajak 2001 (1997), 124.

<sup>274</sup> Such as the speech against irrationality of martyrdom in the cave in *B.J.* quoted above.

<sup>275</sup> Also in his account on the mass suicide committed at Masada; Weitzman 2007, 84.

<sup>276</sup> Weitzman 2007, 84-5. τὰς ψυχὰς οὕτω παρασκευασσάμενους, ὥστ' ἀποθανεῖν ὑπὲρ τῶν νόμων, ἃν δέη; Josephus: *A.J.* 12.6.3; LCL 365, 144.

<sup>277</sup> Weitzman 2007, 86. Examples in *A.J.*, according to Weitzman: Pilate wants to install imperial images in Jerusalem (*A.J.* 18.3.1; LCL 433, 42-6); and Josephus embraces the example of Isaac, who is the perfect martyr image, because of his willingness to die combined with the fact that he does not (*A.J.* 1.13.4; LCL 242, 114); Weitzman 2007, 86-8.

influence of 2 Maccabees 6-7, which gives reasons to believe that there is negative reception of the Maccabean martyrs in *Antiquitates*. In that reception, it seems that Josephus has utilized the fashion and the ethos of the martyrdoms but, instead of crediting the actual martyrs, he devotes the paradigmatic example of the Maccabean martyrs to Mattathias. Josephus reasons for doing this have been further speculated: Goldstein has suggested that Josephus disfavors the Maccabean martyrs because he is “thoroughly Hasmonean”. I am inclined to side with Weitzman, to suggest that Josephus was driven by his personal interest to seek out a respectable way out of the cave, out of his own anti-martyrdom. Therefore, it was convenient for him to embrace the ideals of the martyrs in a setting which does not necessitate death.

### **3.4. Toward Christian-initiated Historiography**

Like for any distinguished group in antiquity, it was important for the Christians too to possess a history and naturally they built upon the biblical history, their Old Testament, and on Judaism.<sup>278</sup> Eusebius is considered the first church historian and thus his work, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, can be taken as a pioneer. Even if there were historiographical materials preceding him, they are mainly preserved by him.<sup>279</sup> In addition, there are historical passages incorporated in exegetical works or correspondences of the church fathers.<sup>280</sup> However, the references to “the Maccabees” in the Christian literature of the first three centuries are abundant but, despite of a few exceptions, poor in content.<sup>281</sup>

Due to these facts, I have limited the analysis of Christian historiography before Eusebius in only one example, Hippolytus’ *Commentarium in Danielelem*.<sup>282</sup> I have picked out Hippolytus of Rome, because I consider the way he receives the

<sup>278</sup> Adler 2008, 587-8. In fact, Christians were often accused of the “newness” and non-historicity of their faith. Similarly Josephus, in his defenses of his religion, needs to argue for the existence of Jewish antiquity, see *C. Ap.* 1.13; LCL 186, 190; the more antique, the truer a religion/tradition was at the time. Cyprian’s *Fort.* 11 is a good example of a Christian putting an effort in showing that nothing new happens to the Christians; Cyprian: *Fort.* 11; CCSL 3:1, 201(-11).

<sup>279</sup> Trompf 2000, 112-9. See also Adler 2008, 585-9. In *Hist. eccl.*, he mentions Clement of Alexandria, Hegesippus, and Julius Africanus as Christian historians before him; Adler 2008, 585. Also Luke is sometimes referred to as the first Christian historian; Trompf 2000, 47.

<sup>280</sup> Biblical exegesis flourished during the first centuries but the Books of Maccabees were not discussed much; Voicu 2010, xxi. Their explicit intention is often not a historiographical account but to explain about the Scripture and their fulfillment; thus, they do not qualify for my categorization of historiographical; for the criteria, see Ch. 2.1.1. In addition, early Christians produced “historical” accounts of martyrdoms during the first three centuries CE; the intertextual connections/allusions to the Maccabean martyrs in that field of literature will be dealt in Ch. 4.1.

<sup>281</sup> Often it is not clear if the reference is made to the martyrs, the Hasmoneans, or the books of the Maccabees; see also Ch. 1.2.

<sup>282</sup> Hippolytus: *Comm. Dan.* 2.10-11 and 2.31-32; PG 10, 649, 659-661.

Maccabean martyrdoms typical of his time, as it is explicit enough to make the reference and yet relatively blurry in its use of it.<sup>283</sup> It is in connection to the book of Daniel where also the earliest Syriac Christian reference to the Maccabean martyrs is made, that is, in Aphrahat's *Demonstration 5*.<sup>284</sup> There, the Maccabean heroes mentioned are "the venerable and aged Eleazar", "the sons of the blessed Samuna, seven in number", and "Judas (Maccabeus) and his brethren".<sup>285</sup>

In fact, Hippolytus narrates the history of the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes twice: first, in relation to Daniel's prophecy of the desolation of the sanctuary, which lasted, according to Hippolytus, until Judas Maccabeus would rise against Antiochus, delivered the city, and recover and restore the sanctuary,<sup>286</sup> and secondly, in relation to Daniel 11, which again foretells the reign of Antiochus IV, this time about his persecution of the Jews.<sup>287</sup> There is no mention of Eleazar, the Maccabean brothers or Judas Maccabeus in Daniel 11 either, although the passage seems to refer to that exact persecution.<sup>288</sup> Hippolytus interprets that the "little help" which the persecuted shall receive, refers to Mattathias and Judas Maccabeus who "delivered them from the hand of Greeks", not to the martyrs.<sup>289</sup>

Thematically, Hippolytus seems to focus more on the persecution than the revolt of the Jews; however, he seems to consider Judas and his companion as the saviors of the Jews. This would indicate that the martyrs were not introduced to him as such active characters as they are depicted in 4 Maccabees and later taken in Christianity. For Hippolytus, it is important to show that the persecution took place as Daniel had prophesized, and the characters involved are of secondary

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<sup>283</sup> Hippolytus' work is dated in early-third century; Rutgers 1998, 293. It is the earliest orthodox commentary to survive; Ferguson 1990, 427. Other similar references are found in e.g. Origen; see Vinson 1994, 172, n. 22. In fact, according to van Henten, Hippolytus provides us with the earliest reference made explicitly to the Maccabees, implying 1 Macc; note 16 in van Henten 2010b, 336.

<sup>284</sup> It is dated to early-fourth century, being a century older than Hippolytus' *Comm. Dan*. The verses commented are in Dan 7; Witkowski 1994, 157-8. However, also Aphrahat's intention is to explain about the Book of Daniel, not to write a historiography.

<sup>285</sup> Aphrahat: *Dem.* 5.19; in Gwynn 1969, 359.

<sup>286</sup> Hippolytus: *Comm. Dan.* 2.10; PG 10, 649. The comment is on Dan. 8:14; in Daniel 8, no characters related to the Maccabean period are mentioned. Hippolytus further notes that these things have been recounted to the prophet [Daniel] by angel Gabriel and are "all clearly described in the books of the Maccabees"; 2.11; PG 10, 649.

<sup>287</sup> Dan. 11:20-39.

<sup>288</sup> Dan 11:32-34, "He shall seduce with intrigue those who violate the covenant; but the people who are loyal to their God shall stand firm and take action. The wise among the people shall give understanding to many; for some days, however, they shall fall by sword and flame, and suffer captivity and plunder. When they fall victim, they shall receive a little help, and many shall join them insincerely." Rajak 2001 (1997), 105.

<sup>289</sup> Hippolytus: *Comm. Dan.* 2.32; PG 10, 661.

importance. This fits the impression I have about the general character of the references to ‘the Maccabees’.<sup>290</sup>

I have decided to limit the sources in analysis of Christian historiography within two important historiographical works which are unprecedented in intent and significance in shaping Christian sense of history, *Historia Ecclesiastica* by Eusebius and *De Civitate Dei* by Augustine.<sup>291</sup> In addition, the late sixth-century *Chronographia* by John Malalas is included, due to its claims about the physical relics of the Maccabean martyrs and their cult.<sup>292</sup> All these books have in common a notion of the Books of Maccabees but they are distinctively diverse in their use of the Maccabean martyrs.

### 3.4.1. The Historiographical Works of Eusebius and Augustine

The grand work of Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, emphasizes historical figures, such as the apostles, the martyrs, and the persecuted Christian in general.<sup>293</sup> According to Trompf, it was Eusebius who “originated the first full-scale history that featured suffering – noble, praiseworthy and ultimately effective suffering – as its central motif”.<sup>294</sup> Trompf refers to the Books of Maccabees as one of Eusebius’ sources of influence: 1 Maccabees provides him a model of a victorious recovery from a persecution and 4 Maccabees embodies a theology of martyrdom.<sup>295</sup>

Of course historically, the Maccabean Revolt is outside the span of a church history.<sup>296</sup> However, Eusebius mentions Josephus with gratitude, because his works are among Eusebius’ sources.<sup>297</sup> In that connection, he mentions that

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<sup>290</sup> See Ch. 1.3. where I figure the emergence of “the Maccabees” within the early centuries CE and speculate on its subject of reference.

<sup>291</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea lived in the immediate aftermath of Constantine’s rule and the empire’s softened attitude towards Christianity; Trompf 2000, 120-2. *Historia Ecclesiastica* was composed in its final form by 325 CE; Maier 1999, 16. Augustine wrote *De Civitate Dei* in the beginning of the fifth century; Trompf 2000, 274. After having witnessed Julian the Apostate’s reign come in the post-Constantian empire, he was not as positivistic as Eusebius about the secured future of the Christian empire; Trompf 2000, 131.

<sup>292</sup> *Chronicle of Malalas* extends from the creation until 560s. 560s must be close to its date of composition, because there are references to it already in 580s and 590s; Croke 1990, 1.

<sup>293</sup> Adler 2008, 592.

<sup>294</sup> Trompf 2000, 131. See also Adler, who lists the main theological tendencies of the fourth century and considers Eusebius the pioneer who presented them and tested them within a historical treatment; Adler 2008, 598.

<sup>295</sup> Trompf 2000, 131.

<sup>296</sup> It is a church history, covering the period from “Christ to Constantine”, that is, until 324 CE; Maier 1999, 9.

<sup>297</sup> Eusebius seems to be generally very positive about Josephus: according to Eusebius, he was the most famous of Jews among Jews and Romans, and worth trusting; Eusebius: *Hist. eccl.* 3.9.2; LCL 153, 226. It seems he was aware of all Josephus’ major works; Eusebius: *Hist. eccl.* 3.9.3-5, 3.10.7; LCL 153, 226-8.



Josephus wrote “yet another work of the merit on *The Supremacy of Reason*, which some call *The Maccabees*, because it concerns the conflicts of those Hebrews cited in the so called books of the Maccabees who fought so valiantly for the worship of God“.<sup>298</sup> Περὶ αὐτοκράτορος λογισμοῦ, known also as the Maccabees, can be nothing but 4 Maccabees.<sup>299</sup>

Knowing the contents of 4 Maccabees, one cannot but conclude that if Eusebius had read the book, he must have known about the martyrs. However, the only thing he mentions about the Maccabees is that they were in conflicts and “fought so valiantly for their worship of God”,<sup>300</sup> which could imply the military heroes, too. As Trompf suggested, Eusebius found a model of a victorious recovery from a persecution in 1 Maccabees, as the reference actually indicates. However, if his theology of martyrdom derives directly from 4 Maccabees and is “so influential on Eusebius’ vocabulary” as Trompf claims,<sup>301</sup> I find it interesting that Eusebius does not connect the book to the martyrs in any way. Does he not appreciate them but only their theology of martyrdom (as Josephus did with 2 Maccabees) or may there be other explanations for the lack of reference?

Elsewhere, Eusebius uses early Christian martyr narratives among which *Martyrs of Lyons* is included.<sup>302</sup> Musurillo accounts that the authenticity of “the document cited by Eusebius” is widely accepted as a source contemporary with the events it describes.<sup>303</sup> In it, the character of Blandina is remarkably similar to that of the Maccabean mother and her choice of words comes remarkably close to 4 Maccabees.<sup>304</sup> Maybe Trompf holds Eusebius responsible for Blandina’s choice of words and credits Eusebius for the theology of martyrdom, which he only copied from the *Letter* and which derives from 4 Maccabees? Returning to

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<sup>298</sup> πεπόνηται δὲ καὶ ἄλλο οὐκ ἀγεννὲς σπούδασμα τῷ ἀνδρὶ, Περὶ αὐτοκράτορος λογισμοῦ, ὃ τινες Μακκαβαϊκὸν ἐπέγραψαν τῷ τοῦ ἀγῶνας τῶν ἐν τοῖς οὕτω καλουμένοις Μακκαβαϊκοῖς συγγράμμασιν ὑπὲρ τῆς εἰς τὸ θεῖον εὐσεβείας ἀνδρῖσαμένων; Eusebius: *Hist. eccl.* 3.10.6; LCL 153, 228.

<sup>299</sup> 4 Macc begins with its philosophical title: Φιλοσοφώτατον λόγον ἐπιδείκνυσθαι μέλλων, εἰ αὐτοδέσποτός ἐστιν τῶν παθῶν ὁ εὐσεβῆς λογισμός, συμβουλευσαίμ’ ἂν ὑμῖν ὀρθῶς ὅπως προσέχητε προθύμως τῇ φιλοσοφίᾳ; “The subject that I am about to discuss is most philosophical, that is, whether devout reason is sovereign over the emotions” (4 Macc 1:1).

<sup>300</sup> συγγράμμασιν ὑπὲρ τῆς εἰς τὸ θεῖον εὐσεβείας ἀνδρῖσαμένων.

<sup>301</sup> According to Trompf, 4 Macc shows remarkable similarities with Eusebius’ wording and provides him with a theology of martyrdom; Trompf 2000, 131. However, as Trompf does not explicate where and how these similarities are found, I have not been able to test his claim, apart from a comparison between 4 Macc and *Martyrs of Lyons*, preserved by Eusebius: *Hist. eccl.* 5.1.53-56; LCL 153, 432-4.

<sup>302</sup> Eusebius: *Hist. eccl.* 5.1; LCL 153, 406-36. The *Letter* is considered a late-second century document; Musurillo 1972, xx, xxii; van Henten & Avemarie 2002, 120.

<sup>303</sup> Musurillo 1972, xx-ii; see also note 13 on p. lxiv.

<sup>304</sup> For a closer comparison between the paradigmatic functions of the figures, see below Ch 4.1.1.

*Historia Ecclesiastica*, nothing in Eusebius' reference to 4 Maccabees implies that he had read anything of it apart from its first verse which happens to be the philosophical title it was known by. The similarities in the *Letter* alone are not convincing enough for arguing that Eusebius was exploiting 4 Maccabees. The *Letter*, although it is surely touched by Eusebius, was very probably not written by him and thus the ideas it communicates could have been generally approved, even highlighted by Eusebius, without being associated with the Maccabean martyrdoms.<sup>305</sup> Thus far, I conclude that in Eusebius' mind, the Maccabees are not associated with the martyrs, as I consider it only a highly theoretical alternative that Eusebius could have wanted to dismiss the glory of the Maccabean martyrdoms when he seems to have had nothing against its theology of martyrdom, quite on the contrary.

Also Augustine mentions 'the Maccabees' in *de Civitate Dei*. First, in connection to his argumentation about the antiquity of the prophetic records, Augustine mentions the time after the restoration of the temple which "is not to be found in the Holy Scriptures which are called canonical, but in other writings, among which are the books of the Maccabees".<sup>306</sup> He tells that the books are considered canonical by the Church and not by the Jews. Reason for this difference of opinion is found in "the fierce and wondrous sufferings of certain of the martyrs who, before Christ came in the flesh, contended even unto death for God's Law".<sup>307</sup> Hence, it is obvious that Augustine was familiar with the Maccabean martyrs when writing *de Civitate Dei*. To Augustine, the martyrs are the stumbling stone, weighty enough reason for the Jews to reject the whole accounts; as we know that the Jews rejected also 2 Maccabees, maybe even 1 Maccabees, there is no reason to suppose that this evaluation resembles any other reality than that of Augustine's attitude.

However, when Augustine elsewhere retells the history of Jews before the birth of Jesus – including Alexander's invasion, the mixing of the priestly and kingly authorities by the Jews, and Antiochus forcing Jews to worship idols – he refers to the Books of Maccabees as his source. There, he concludes that "Judas, called Maccabeus, the doughtiest captain of the Jews, repulsed the warlords of

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<sup>305</sup> Eusebius' own comments show that he has not copied the document without thinking as "some of the details are simply too good to be true"; however, we do not know the extent he may (or may not) have edited it; van Henten & Avemarie 2002, 98.

<sup>306</sup> Augustine: *Civ.* 18.36; CCSL 48, 632.

<sup>307</sup> Augustine: *Civ.* 18.36; CCSL 48, 632.

Antiochus and cleansed the temple of all the defilements of that idolatry”.<sup>308</sup> Between the two references I consider the one narrating the persecution more historiographical. It is surprising indeed that Augustine, who thinks the martyrdoms were the reason the Church cared to read the Books of Maccabees, suddenly gives the historically active and effective role to Judas when re-narrating the persecution? How come he is lacking the need to introduce the spectacular effectiveness of the Maccabean martyrs when given a chance?

One answer may be provided by Augustine’s understanding of “the city of God” as both historical and universal. While history of Rome is its counterpoint, the history of the city of God is not simply a church history (in comparison to Eusebius): before the Church, the city of God was foreshadowed in the career of Israel, although, according to Augustine, the Hebrews had finally failed to follow the divine will and the Romans had defeated it.<sup>309</sup> This may explain why the martyrs seem not to have had historiographical value to Augustine, not over Judas and the rebels, while they appear effective in Augustine’s evaluation against his contemporary Jews.<sup>310</sup>

### 3.4.2. The Maccabean Martyrs Emerge in Christian Historiography

It takes time and effort before the Maccabean martyrs are properly introduced in Christian historiography. Presumably it is Malalas who is the first to recount, rather surprisingly, that “[a] man named Judas, a Jew by race, came to Antioch the Great and begged and entreated the emperor Demetrianos, and the emperor turned over to him the temple and the Maccabees’ remains.”<sup>311</sup> The passage is exceptional and has no origin in the Books of Maccabees or other historiographical sources I have studied. To better understand Malalas’ reception, I take out three elements in the insertion: “Antioch the Great”, the identity of the remains of the Maccabees, and the role of Judas.

First of all, John Malalas is renowned for his appeal to Antioch and thus his historical focus is localized, Antiochine. Antioch, “Antioch the Great”, is in the centre of his world. Furthermore, he was particularly “interested in searching out

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<sup>308</sup> Augustine: *Civ.* 18.45; CCSL 48, 642.

<sup>309</sup> Trompf 2000, 269-70.

<sup>310</sup> In addition, Augustine embraces the memory of those martyrs in two of his sermons, which will be dealt more in Ch 4.2.1. During the composition of *Civ.*, that is, in the early fifth century, the Christians have venerated the Maccabean martyrs as martyr-saints Rouwhorst 2005, 88, beginning of the fifth century.

<sup>311</sup> John Malalas: *Chron.* 8; PG 47, 324. On the information about the author, we must rely on what the book tells, namely, that he was called John and came from Antioch. Croke 1990, 2-3.

documents, especially those which throw light on modern customs and works of art”.<sup>312</sup> Thus the insertion above would suggest that he had reasons to be interested in certain local contemporary customs which had something to do with “the Maccabees’ remains”.

The Maccabees stand for the martyrs since Judas’ military actions are not included in *Chronographia*, which does not connect Judas with the name Maccabeus and pays no attention to the burials of the Hasmoneans.<sup>313</sup> As the Maccabean Revolt is not mentioned at all, the militants or the martyrs do not play an effective role in solving it.<sup>314</sup> Hence, the most interesting issue is not what has been left out but what is brought in: the story of the martyrs does not end at their death but continues, and most importantly, on earth. Judas, the military genius, has an important role in history only but as the man who strived for the possession and preservation of the remains of the martyrs. Furthermore, “[h]e buried them [the Maccabees’ remains] in Antioch the Great in the place known as the Kerateon; for there was a Jewish synagogue there”.<sup>315</sup>

Malalas’ *Chronographia* testifies that, by the end of the sixth century, there existed a cult of the Maccabean martyrs, in connection to a site where their remains were kept in Antioch.<sup>316</sup> The cult of the Maccabean martyrs has been a debated scholarly issue in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond, not least because of Malalas who implies that the relics of the Maccabees were preserved in a synagogue before the emergence of the Christian cult.<sup>317</sup> Recently, Rouwhorst has published two articles in which he summarizes the research history of the

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<sup>312</sup> Croke 1990, 5, 7.

<sup>313</sup> Malalas recounts that Antiochus “besieged [Jerusalem], attacked and captured it and massacred everyone” out of anger. He continues that Antiochus “brought Eleazar, the high priest of the Jews, and the Maccabees to Antioch, where he tortured and killed them”; John Malalas: *Chron.* 8; PG 47, 321, 324-5.

<sup>314</sup> Malalas knows that Antiochus further “abolished the office of high priests in Judea and made the temple of the Jews, that of Solomon, into a temple of Olympian Zeus and Athene, polluting the building with pig flesh. Finally, he tells that he also “prohibited them from their ancestral worship and forced them to follow Hellenistic customs for three years”. No indicator is given to tell why the situation changed after three years. The Hellenization does not connect to the martyrs because they had already been tortured and killed.

<sup>315</sup> John Malalas: *Chron.* 8; PG 47, 324. According to the Books of Maccabees, Judas, after purifying the temple, goes into various battles and finally dies at the battlefield; 1 Macc 9:14-18.

<sup>316</sup> In support, there are sermons in praise of the Maccabean martyrs, the first one given by Gregory of Nazianzus already in ca. 360 CE in Cappadocia/Antioch; see “Gregory Nazianzen’s Homily 15 and the Genesis of the Christian Cult of the Maccabean martyrs”; Vinson 1994.

<sup>317</sup> It is perhaps worth mentioning that the passage of Malalas is not considered historical in any ways; Moffatt 1990, 90-1.

Maccabean cult,<sup>318</sup> and therefore I will go into the issue only as far as to say what he concludes.<sup>319</sup>

With regard to the rise of the cult, Rouwhorst remarks that its spread was “unusually rapid and wide” and that the Maccabean martyrs were the only pre-Christian figures who made it into the Roman calendar of saints.<sup>320</sup> There are two issues which have been debated among the scholars the most: the possible Jewish origins of the Christian cult and the reasons why it emerges as a Christian cult in Antioch towards the end of the fourth century.<sup>321</sup> In addition to a clear conclusion of the scholarly views, Rouwhorst offers his own contribution to the discussion, which does not presume any Jewish background or a special discovery for the emergence of the cult: Rouwhorst points out the Christian fourth-century trend to unearth the hallowed figures, presented by Peter Brown, and highlights the fact that the Maccabean martyrs were popular among Christians already before the emergence of the cult.<sup>322</sup>

As a conclusion, the Maccabean martyrs make their way into Christian historiography only after their Christian cult has been established; after their relics have been discovered and located in a church. Sermons of Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom, Augustine and Leo I testify for the fact that the Christians, not only in Antioch but all around the Christian world, venerated the Maccabean martyrs. Malalas, being a historian with a particular interest in the backgrounds of customs, explains the origins of the relics, making Judas Maccabeus their first guardian. In this context, the historiographical value of the Maccabean martyrs is not in how they shaped the past; it is most prominently in how they shape the present. Brown states that discovering relics in the fourth century (and onwards) was not an archaeological matter but a sign of God’s mercy; it showed that “God

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<sup>318</sup> *The Emergence of the Cult of the Maccabean Martyrs in Late Antique Christianity* (Rouwhorst 2005); and *The Cult of the Seven Maccabean Brothers and Their Mother in Christian tradition* (Rouwhorst 2004).

<sup>319</sup> The Christian cult of the Maccabean martyrs is discussed in exact in Ch 4.2.

<sup>320</sup> Rouwhorst 2005, 81. To find the Maccabean martyrs, or several other pre/non-Christian figures, in late antique Christian cultic calendars is not exceptional, quite on the contrary; however, the remarkability of the Maccabees is that they make it into the Roman calendar and, in fact, remain there until the 20<sup>th</sup> century; Rouwhorst 2004, 183-5. The “final decline” of the cult does is dated back to year 1969, when their commemoration day was combined with several other Christian martyr-saints; Rouwhorst 2004, 202-3.

<sup>321</sup> Rouwhorst 2005, 81-2. Schatkin 1974 has argued for the Jewish origins of the cult; Vinson 1994 holds that there were competing cults, a Christian and a Jewish; while Rutgers 1998 claims the cult was a Christian invention.

<sup>322</sup> Rouwhorst 2005, 82; 2004, 188-191. The nature of this popularity will be analyzed in Ch. 4 and is therefore only mentioned here.

had judged that the community deserved the praesentia of the saint”.<sup>323</sup> Thus, Malalas’ *Chronicle* shows how the Maccabean martyrs were given a function in Christian historiography and how, concurrently, they were in fact detached from the accounts in the Books of Maccabees.

Rutgers remarks that, starting from the mid-fourth century, bones of the long-dead martyrs were often discovered “accidentally”, by divine intervention.<sup>324</sup> in fact, Peter Brown has suggested in his *Rise of the Cult of Saints* that a change occurred in Christian mentality with respect to the martyr-saints’ role in Late Antiquity, approximately during Augustine’s lifetime and his works reflect it. While, in his first major work, *Confessiones*, the martyr-saints have no specific function, in the process of writing *de Civitate Dei*, Augustine encounters the cult of the martyrs, which presented “a paradox that enabled Augustine to invent the traditional hierarchy of the universe. Men who had shown themselves, as martyrs, to be true servants of God, could bind their fellow men even closer to God than could the angels”. As a result, the martyrs grow in importance and respect even over the angels in heaven, because of their status as both human and yet holy.<sup>325</sup>

In my study Hippolytus, certainly, qualifies as a case which precedes this change of mentality: as the analysis has shown, he appreciated Antiochus’ persecution mainly because it had been mediated in a prophecy through an angel, and did not exploit the martyr characters. By *de Civitate Dei*, Augustine should, according to Brown’s suggestion, show more interested in giving credit to human agents and, as we have seen, he does. However, instead of a martyr-saint, it is Judas Maccabeus who is considered effective in Augustine’s historiography. Yet, even in *Civitate*, the martyrs appear in an effective role as their appreciation distinguishes a Christian from a Jew: the Christians have the eye for their merits, whereas the Jews have failed to see them. Reading *Civitates*, one would however not have guessed how the martyrs were to gaining historiographical status over

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<sup>323</sup> Brown 1981, 92.

<sup>324</sup> Rutgers 1998, 301. For the praesentia, see Brown on the process of “localizing the holy”: “The discovery of a relic, therefore, was far more than an act of pious archaeology”, no less than the “mercy of God lies at the root of the discovery”; Brown 1981, 88, 92-3.

<sup>325</sup> Brown 1981, 60-1. In his book, Brown distinguishes between Latin Christianity and other Christian, Jewish, and Muslim approaches to the saints, by claiming that in the West, the ecclesial hierarchy was joined with the tombs of the saints and they correlated in possession of power; Brown 1981, 9-10. This does, however, not imply that the same development with regard to the relics themselves would not have taken place elsewhere, too; see e.g. note 37, where Brown presents a contrasting example from Eastern Christianity, where a priest taking care of a tomb was under a constant threat of excommunication of his bishop. For my study, the important thing is that there, too, the tomb and the relics were influential.

Judas in the century that followed: in *Chronographia* of John Malalas, the relics of the martyrs have landed onto earth.

### **3.5. A Brief Excursion into Additional Sources**

Lastly, I briefly introduce the readers with two rather peculiar sources which contain a reception of the Maccabean martyrs and qualify as historiographical: *5 Maccabees*, known also as *the Arabic Maccabean book*, *Second Book of the Maccabees*,<sup>326</sup> and the Old Slavonic version of Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*.<sup>327</sup> Both these works may provide insights to a further comparative study of the Jewish and Christian reception of the Maccabean martyrs in historiographical sources. I have not been able to include them in the actual analysis, because of problems related to the text editions: I have not had access to the version in Old Slavonic and I cannot read it, and *5 Maccabees'* Arabic version has thus far not been translated.<sup>328</sup> Furthermore, the Old Slavonic version appears to be relatively late, in comparison to my other sources, and *5 Maccabees'* date is very obscure. My reason for introducing the books lies in my interest in making them more known. I will also refer back to their contents in Chapter 4.3.

Compared with the other Books of Maccabees, *5 Maccabees* covers the most extensive period of history: it starts from the temple treasury of Heliodorus and continues until the death of Herod the Great's sons.<sup>329</sup> Content-wise, it connects to 2 Maccabees and the martyrdoms of Eleazar and the seven brothers are re-told 5 Maccabees 4-5. The accounts are comparable to those in 2 Maccabees in length, structure and content.<sup>330</sup> However, Charlesworth has remarked that, besides the Books of Maccabees, the author has exploited not only

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<sup>326</sup> For an introduction to the book, see Charlesworth 1796, 153-6. Charlesworth remarks that 5 Macc should not be confused with another late-antique text, also known as the "Fifth Book of Maccabees", which is a translation based on Josephus' *B.J.* 6, and found in Peshitta (Syriac Christian translation of the bible), Bibliotheca Ambrosiana; Charlesworth 1972, 156. See also Mescerskij 2003, 26-27.

<sup>327</sup> The translation is found in Leeming & Leeming 2003, in paralleling paragraphs with the Greek version (in *B.J.* 1.33.2; LCL 203,308). The Old Slavonic additions are also presented in Appendix Slavonic "additions" 7; LCL 201,642-3.

<sup>328</sup> The earliest manuscripts of *5 Macc* are in Garshuni/Arabic, from the 5<sup>th</sup> century, but have, apparently, not been edited. The only English translation available is based on a later Latin manuscript (in the Paris & London Polyglottas). Besides the problematic dating of the book, also the question of its original language (whether Hebrew or Greek) has been disputed; Charlesworth 1972, 156. The quotes are from the English translation, although I have compared the contents with the Arabic manuscript.

<sup>329</sup> That is, from 277 to 6/5 BCE. See the brief introduction to the book in Cotton 1832, 277.

<sup>330</sup> In both 2 and 5 Macc, the two martyrdoms remain separate: Eleazar is confronted by the king's substitute man Felix, whereas "[a]fter this, seven brothers were seized, and their mother; and they were sent to the king; for he had not yet gone far away"; 5 Macc 5:1; see also 2 Macc 7:1.

Josephus' works but also other sources.<sup>331</sup> The historical narration of *5 Maccabees* wavers, perhaps exactly because of the abundance of various sources used, which is shown, for example, in the confusion the author seems to have had, while keeping track on Antiochus' travels: in 5 Macc 3, he is reported to have left the country and is not present in Eleazar's execution, accounted in 5 Macc 4; however, when the seven brothers were seized with their mother, they are sent to the king, who "had not yet gone far away from Jerusalem".<sup>332</sup>

I have collected the peculiarities found in *5 Maccabees*' accounts of the martyrs. First of all, the description of the conflict preceding the martyrdoms reports that the Jews were compelled not only to eat pork but also to worship his (Antiochus?) image.<sup>333</sup> In regard to Eleazar, the reader is provided with more information about his background, as he is identified as one of the seventy translators of the Septuagint.<sup>334</sup> The translation legend including a man named Eleazar is also found in Josephus' *Antiquitates*, but that character has nothing to do with the martyrs.<sup>335</sup> Like in 2 Maccabees, the purpose of Eleazar's martyrdom is to leave an example of constancy in religion for his nation and its youth to imitate.<sup>336</sup> The brothers are brought in front of Antiochus one by one and the book does not account for them exhorting one another. One also finds no biblical quotations in the accounts. However, the last boy explicates the purpose of their deaths in a manner similar to 2 Maccabees: "I trust that the wrath of God will depart from his people, on account of what we have suffered for them".<sup>337</sup> Antiochus, when turning to the mother, calls her a happy woman, and when she encourages her son, she is reported to have kissed him and "laughed to scorn the things which had been said to her by Antiochus".<sup>338</sup> Finally, the mother dies on account of her own request: she "intreated God, and besought Him that she might follow her sons; and immediately she died".<sup>339</sup>

*5 Maccabees* is a peculiar work, not least because its origin, date and thus reliability are very uncertain; according to Charlesworth's hypothesis, which he

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<sup>331</sup> Charlesworth suggests Jason of Cyrene, Justus of Tiberias, or Nicolaus of Damascus for those sources; Charlesworth 1976, 154.

<sup>332</sup> 5 Macc 5:1.

<sup>333</sup> 5 Macc 3:14.

<sup>334</sup> 5 Macc 4:1; 5 Macc 2.

<sup>335</sup> For more information, see *General Index in Josephus in ten volumes*; LCL 456.

<sup>336</sup> "[M]y people and the youths of my nation will bravely imitate me" (5 Macc 4:8); "I would rather die, leaving to them a constancy in religion and patience against tyranny; [...] so that through me they may be rendered happy, not unhappy"; 5 Macc 4:12.

<sup>337</sup> 5 Macc 5:50.

<sup>338</sup> 5 Macc 5:38.

<sup>339</sup> 5 Macc 5:53.



calls “tentative”, it could be dated as early as to late-first century Common Era.<sup>340</sup> However, there is a connection between *5 Maccabees* and a Jewish historical chronicle *Josippon*, which is written in the tenth century,<sup>341</sup> in “excellent biblical Hebrew style”, encompassing Jewish history from the Second Temple Period until the fall of Masada.<sup>342</sup> As a matter of fact, it is not before *Josippon*, that we have explicit evidence for the Jewish reception of the Books of Maccabees and Josephus.<sup>343</sup> Further studies may show if it was only attached to it, re-written in, or composed along with it.<sup>344</sup>

As I have noted, Josephus’ works have no reception in Rabbinic Judaism before *Josippon* but, instead, they were popular among early Christians.<sup>345</sup> One of the translations of *Bellum Judaicum* is of particular interest with respect to the reception-historical questions dealt in this chapter. In the introduction to the war in the 60s, Josephus makes references previous examples of heroism, skimming through the history of Jews. In the Old Slavonic version of the book, the following “speech”<sup>346</sup> is reported:

“It is a fine thing to die for the Law of our fathers. For immortal glory will follow; we shall die, and our souls will have eternal joy. Those who “die unmanly”, who are lovers of their bodies, unwilling to die like men, but ending [their lives] through sickness, inglorious they suffer unending torments in hell. Come, men of Judea, now is the time for men to behave like men, to show what reverence we have for the Law of Moses. Let not our race be shamed, let us not bring disgrace on our Law-giver. Let us take as the model for [our] exploits Eleazar “first” and the seven Maccabee brothers and the mother who made men [of them]. For when Antiochus had conquered and subjugated our land and was ruling over us, he was defeated by these seven youths and [their] old teacher and an old woman. Let us also be worthy of them, let us not prove weaker than a woman. But even if we are to be tortured for our zeal for God, a greater wreath “has been” plaited for us. And if they kill us, our soul as it leaves [this] dark abode will return to [our] forefathers, where Abraham and his offspring [dwell].”<sup>347</sup>

<sup>340</sup> Charlesworth 1972, 155.

<sup>341</sup> Charlesworth 1976, 155. *Josippon* is dated back to the 10<sup>th</sup> Cen; Flusser 2007, 461. A Hebrew edition of the text has been made by D. Flusser (*The Josippon [Josephus Gorionides]*. Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute. 1981

<sup>342</sup> *Josippon* is based on Latin translations of several source, including Josephus’ works (hence its title), 1 and 2 Macc and some Talmudic literature; Flusser 2007, 461; Flusser 2009, 152-3. Note, however, that Flusser does not mention *5 Macc* among the sources of the author of *Josippon*.

<sup>343</sup> Stemberger 1992, 203.

<sup>344</sup> According to Charlesworth, a theory should not be suggested “[w]ithout having completed a detailed research on the relationship of 5 Maccabees with the other Maccabean books, with Josephus’ two works, and with *Josippon*”; Charlesworth 1972, 155.

<sup>345</sup> Mescerskij 2003, 26-7. They were translated into Latin and Syriac in various editions. The Christian reception was so intense that, as a result, Josephus was considered a Christian or even a bishop; Mescerskij 2003, 26-7.

<sup>346</sup> According to the text, two “doctors” are reported to have given it; Leeming & Leeming 2003, 228..

<sup>347</sup> The translation is found in Leeming & Leeming 2003, 228-9. Another translation is found in Appendix Slavonic “additions” 7; LCL 201,642-3.

A comparison with the original account in *Bellum* shows that the whole quoted speech is an addition; in *Bellum* the exhortations are only paraphrased.<sup>348</sup> In the insertion, Eleazar and the brothers are explicitly exploited as models. Furthermore, the brothers are attributed with “Maccabee” and, with their teacher and mother, credited for defeating Antiochus. One finds dying for the Law highly emphasized and contrasted with an “unmanly” death; moreover, the listeners are exhorted to prove themselves no “weaker than a woman”. Lastly, the insertion may imply that the Maccabean martyrs are counted among the forefathers, as the offspring of Abraham.

The history of the Old Slavonic manuscript is uncertain. Although formally considered translated literature, it is more correctly a re-writing of Josephus by a Christian Russian author in the tenth or eleventh century.<sup>349</sup> The additional material is generally considered Christian, due to its contents and the fact that the style does not stem with that of Josephus.<sup>350</sup> One must admit, or credit the author-editor, that he has indeed noticed that Josephus had missed something that should be there, as Eleazar, the seven brothers and their mother fit perfectly into the context, to be exploited exactly like that. The Old Slavonic version reveals, most perceptibly, how historiography carries paradigmatic implications within or, as a matter of fact, is thoroughly paradigmatic. Perhaps, by its composition, the Maccabean martyrs have increased in paradigmatic importance outside the historiographical works into such an exhaustive role that they can no longer be dismissed. The insertion in *Bellum* incorporates many if not most of the general paradigmatic functions which are attached to the Maccabean martyrs in Christian reception, to which the readers will be introduced in Chapter 4.

### **3.6. Conclusions**

The Maccabean martyrs – Eleazar, the seven brothers and their mother – first appear in 2 Maccabees 6-7, in early-first century BCE. At approximately the same time, another Jewish historiographical work on the Maccabean Revolt is composed. Above, I have presented Goldstein’s hypothesis, in which he claims

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<sup>348</sup> See *B.J.* 1.33.2; LCL 203,308.

<sup>349</sup> Mescerskij 2003, 27-8. Mescerskij holds that the “addition” are composed by the Russian translator while his ground text was probably a copy of the generally accepted Greek version.

<sup>350</sup> Mescerskij 2003, 40. The “additions” thus represent a “complete and sustained literary and artistic achievement” of the translator, a work of the Russian author. In contrast, some scholars have suggested that the additions may preserve parts of the original Aramaic text written by Josephus. Due to “some obvious Christian interpolations”, they cannot be considered wholly of Josephus’; for a brief discussion, see Thackeray 1928; LCL 201, 635.

that 1 and 2 Maccabees are not only disparate but oppositional in their historiographical view of the Maccabean Revolt: 2 Maccabees may derive from circles critical of the Hasmonean dynasty, whereas 1 Maccabees has a distinct pro-Hasmonean perspective. As a consequence, the Hasmoneans are the key characters in 1 Maccabees, whereas 2 Maccabees leaves potential room for several effective figures, such as the martyrs, for example.

The historiographical sections in 4 Maccabees build on 2 Maccabees. I have shown that it may imply an oppositional stance towards the Hasmonean dynasty, which could be set in continuum with that of 2 Maccabees. The exclusion of Judas and total lack of interest in the military efforts in general, and verse 4 Macc 4:19 in particular, could be considered pointers towards that conclusion. The historically effective role, which 4 Maccabees devotes solely to the martyrs, is unique. The embracing reception of the martyrdoms leads towards marginalization of several other potentially effective historiographical elements in 4 Maccabees: not only the Hasmonean military heroes but also the temple as the centre of the Jewish religious life and, as I have suggested, the activity of God as the Lord of history. The author's approach to history is not only philosophical but also, and fundamentally, theological. His historiographical project reflects concerns of (neo)national survival, very probably in Diaspora, in which empowered individual pious figures of the past are much needed as setting a paradigmatic example for the community in the present.

There is no explicit reception of the martyrs in Josephus' historiographical works. However, in my analysis, I have, in partial agreement with Goldstein, analyzed Josephus' potential negative reception of the martyrs: I have studied Mattathias' farewell speech in *Antiquitates* 12.6.3,<sup>351</sup> in comparison to 2 Maccabees 6-7. I have concluded that Josephus uses the exemplary ethos of all the Maccabean martyrs in his refashioning of Mattathias' exhortation to military heroism. In that way, Josephus represses the memory of the martyrs as he constructs his ideal of the impressive and historically effective heroes. Against Goldstein's view, I have concluded that Josephus' reasons for the repression may be found in the attitude he has adopted towards (Jewish) martyrdom, and I have opposed those who claim that Josephus' attitude towards martyrdom is wholeheartedly positive (such as Rajak). Instead, I have followed Weitzman. He suggests that Josephus in fact fashions a new idea of martyrdom, based on his

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<sup>351</sup> LCL 365, 142-6.

personal experiences, according to which one can practice the virtues of martyrdom without having to actually die. Therefore, the characters who aim at death, such as the Maccabean martyrs, are not embraced in his works but the characters who struggle for survival, as he himself did, such as Mattathias' sons.

The (late) antique Rabbinic literature does not deal with the Maccabean martyrs in their historical context and the Rabbis were generally quiet about the Hasmonean period. Also, Christian historiographical reception emerges no earlier than in the early fourth century, when the earliest Christian historiographies are dated.<sup>352</sup> To exemplify what the earlier historical references to the Maccabees were like, I have presented Hippolytus' *Commentarium in Daniele* and Aprahat's *Demonstration 5*. More importantly, I have analyzed sources from the fourth and fifth centuries which relate to the Maccabean Revolt and could potentially contain a reception of the Maccabean martyrs. First of all, Eusebius knew the Books of Maccabees<sup>353</sup> and his *Historia Ecclesiastica* reflects at least the general influence of the books' narratives of persecution and martyrdom in them;<sup>354</sup> however, he does not make reference to the martyrs themselves. I am left with two possible conclusions: either Eusebius only knew the books by the title and the influence reflected is not his work but was already incorporated in the sources he used; or he had reasons to leave out the Maccabean martyrs. Since *Historia* is a church history, Eusebius may have lacked a reason to mention martyrs who were pre-Christian.

Augustine, in *de Civitate Dei*, seems to mention the Books of Maccabees exactly because of the martyr narratives they include. By Augustine's time, the Maccabean martyrs have already a more established role within Christianity: a Christian cult of the Maccabean martyrs had just emerged, originating in late fourth-century Antioch. Although Augustine is known to have preached on the commemoration day of the martyrs, the martyrs do not appear to be historically effective to him: in *de Civitate Dei*, Judas Maccabeus is given the glory for saving the Jews. The case is quite the contrary in Malalas' *Chronicle* half a century later,

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<sup>352</sup> I have concluded on a relatively general level that the historiographical references to the Maccabees before the fourth century are vague and their subject of reference could be the military heroes, the martyrs, both, or none in particular. I could certainly have dwelled upon the references to the Maccabees in early Christian exegetical works and various correspondences and searched for repression; the categorization of my analysis into historiographical and paradigmatic may indeed have directed my attention away from such sources which in character fall between the two.

<sup>353</sup> At least 1, 2, and 4 Macc.

<sup>354</sup> The influence of the Maccabean martyrs on early Christian martyr narratives, cited also in Eusebius' *Hist. eccl.*, are discussed in Ch. 4.

where the relics of the Maccabean martyr-saints are given attention over Judas' victories or the whole Revolt. Malalas' *Chronicle* may be among the first Christian historiographies which encompasses the pre-Christian era, including an account of the Maccabean martyrdoms. As this takes place in Antioch, I suggest that the cult – with relics and sites related to it – must have been effective in the process of making the martyrs emerge in Christian historiography. In addition, the change of mentality toward angels and saints in Late Antiquity, suggested by Peter Brown, seems to suit the case of the reception of the Maccabean martyrs.

In addition, I have referred to *5 Maccabees* and the Slavonic version of Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum*, which are very interesting in their reception of the Maccabean martyrdoms and in relation to the other cases of reception. The Slavonic manuscript, which is of Christian origin, has inserted the Maccabean martyrs in *Bellum*, and *5 Maccabees* presents their martyrdom as a part of the Maccabean history in a manner similar to *2 Maccabees*. However, these sources are either obscure or relatively late and in any case difficult to relate closely to the other sources analyzed so far. I have included the receptions in the study in order to hint toward the fixing of the martyrs into the course of history of not only Christian but also Jewish historiography. Furthermore, I will return to their specific features again in Chapter 4.3., where I investigate the reception-history in a thematic comparative perspective.

In sum, there was vibrant interest among Greek-speaking Jews in writing the Maccabean Revolt during the centuries around the turn of the Common Era. The interest ceased by the time of the Rabbis and does not reappear before the Middle Ages. *4 Maccabees* is a lone wolf among the antique Jewish sources, trying to make the Maccabean martyrs the most effective figures in the history of the Maccabean Revolt. Josephus can show to have rather repressed their memory. In Christianity, despite the presumed interest in the Maccabean martyrs from its first century onwards, their reception in terms of historiography increases only along with the emergence of the Christian veneration of the Maccabean martyrs as martyr-saints. The cult also results in the discovery of their relics in Antioch. Eusebius and Augustine, even if they seem to relate to the Maccabean martyrs in a positive way, do not consider them historically effective characters. The question, I would say, is not that of negative reception but rather lack of interest or choice of focus. Knowing how eagerly *4 Maccabees* was received by the early Christians,

it is surprising how long it takes for the Maccabean martyrs to establish themselves in Christian historiography.

The analysis has also confirmed that historiography carries within itself paradigmatic functions in various ways. Several, if not all of, the cases analyzed show that history is not written for the past issues but for the present. I have not been able – not even wanted to – avoid slipping onto the arena of paradigmatic functions in the analysis, although I have put an effort in limiting it within the sources I have categorized historiographical. Those efforts have rewarded me with a chance to include such important sources as the works of Josephus' in the analysis of reception. This way, the categorization has provided me with a better understanding of not only the reception of the Maccabean martyrs in Judaism but also the lack of it. It has further widened my vision of the Christian reception and made me notice that the Maccabean martyrs, even if counted among the first martyrs in history, do not necessarily play such a significant role in the Christian sense of history. As I have hinted in the section about the Slavonic reception of the Maccabean martyrs, the later we move in the study of reception, the more difficult it is to distinguish between the historiographical and (otherwise) paradigmatic functions of the Maccabean martyrs, since the understanding of history influences the present opinions and vice versa. Thus, I will now move forward to my second analysis, the analysis of the reception of the Maccabean martyrs in paradigmatic contexts.

#### **4. The Use of the Maccabean Martyrs as Paradigmatic Figures**

Beside the historiographical sources dealing with the Maccabean Revolt, the Maccabean martyrs also appear in several other literary settings. My second analysis – the analysis of the paradigmatic functions of the Maccabean martyrs in their early Christian and Jewish reception – builds on two performative contexts of reception: martyrdom and the context of actual/possible persecution (Ch. 4.1.), and cult and liturgical celebration of the Maccabean martyrs (Ch. 4.2.). The analysis provides the readers with an insight into the possible and variable use of the Maccabean martyrs in these contexts. Furthermore, I attempt a thematic comparison among the cases of reception related to the reception of two characteristics of the Maccabean martyrdoms: the law and the mother.

The sources included in the analysis will be introduced in the beginning of each chapter (4.1., 4.2., and 4.3.). For a comprehensive list of sources, please, see Chapter 1.3., and for the text editions and translations used, Chapter 6.

#### **4.1. The Maccabean Echo in the Ideas of Martyrdom**

In research literature, the most common reference to the Maccabean martyrs is with regard to the impact they have had on early Christianity and more precisely on the development of Christian martyrdom. The study of early Rabbinic Judaism has been less interested in the phenomenon of martyrdom and thereby in the influence of the Maccabean martyrs.<sup>355</sup> However, the characters of the mother and her seven sons are found in the classical Rabbinic literature and considered the “archetypes of Jewish martyrology”.<sup>356</sup> In this chapter, I explore the use of the Maccabean martyrs in early Christian and Rabbinic literature in the performative context of martyrdom. Regarded as archetypical martyrs, how do or do they function as cornerstones in constructing the ideals of martyrdom?

Within Christianity, the earliest reception is implicit but by the third century the Maccabean martyrs are explicitly fashioned into role models for Christian martyrs. As examples of early Christian martyr narratives, I have chosen *Martyrs of Lyons*, related to us by Eusebius, *Martyrdom of Saints Marian and James*, and *Martyrdom of Saints Montanus and Lucius*, and Chapter 11 in Hebrews.<sup>357</sup> Furthermore, texts which present the Maccabean martyrs as role models are Origen’s *Exhortatio ad martyrium* and Cyprian’s *Ad Fortunatum*.<sup>358</sup> For the sake of comparison, I have also included Aphrahat’s *Demonstration 21*, which is a fourth-century Syriac Christian text.<sup>359</sup>

For the discussion on Jewish reception, I introduce all the four Rabbinic versions of the story of the woman and her seven sons.<sup>360</sup> As these texts are fairly

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<sup>355</sup> For both, see Ch 1.4; for the general lack of Jewish interest in the Maccabean martyrs’ affairs, esp. van Henten 1997, 2-3.

<sup>356</sup> Herr 2007c, 641.

<sup>357</sup> Apart from Hebrews, the chosen examples are found also in *Les martyrs Maccabées: de l’histoire juive au culte chrétien*; Ziadé 2007, 70-76, 88-102. In his article, van Henten includes Hebrews in the list of early Christian texts which contain reception of the Maccabean martyrs, as he summarizes the reception before Origen; van Henten 2010b, 333. The titles used of the martyr narratives are according to Musurillo.

<sup>358</sup> Origen: *Exhortatio ad martyrium* (*Mart.*); Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 3-47. Cyprian: *Ad Fortunatum* (*Fort.*); CCL 3, 183-216. Both the texts are from the third-century; O’Meara 1954, 10; Deferrari 1958, 311.

<sup>359</sup> Aphrahat: *Demonstration 11 – Of Persecution*; I use only the translation. Other fourth-century sources, such as Ambrose of Milan and the sermons on the Maccabean martyrs, are discussed in the following chapters.

<sup>360</sup> As already noted, the four rabbinic versions of the mother and her seven sons are the only existing ones within the classic Rabbinic literature and the span of my study; 2007a, 325. They are

unknown, it makes sense to see how, and if, they could be considered martyr narratives from the Jewish perspective. To contextualize the Rabbinic reception, I have investigated what may have qualified as Jewish martyrdom in Antiquity and searched through my materials for motives connected to the Rabbinic idea of martyrdom, *kiddush ha-Shem*. In addition, I attempt a comparative analysis among three martyr narratives found in the Babylonian Talmud: the mother and her seven sons, the four hundred boys and girls, and rabbi Aqiva, one of the most famous Jewish martyrs.<sup>361</sup>

#### 4.1.1. Influence on Early Christian Martyr Literature

It is presumed that the Maccabean martyrs, especially 4 Maccabees, have had a profound influence on the early Christian martyr accounts from their very beginning.<sup>362</sup> To show this influence, Ziadé has drawn parallels between the Maccabean martyrs and the martyr characters in *Martyrs of Lyons*.<sup>363</sup> Starting from the texture of the group, the echo of the Maccabean martyrs can hardly be disputed: as a correspondent to Eleazar, there is Pothinus who “had been entrusted with the care of the province of Lyons” and was “over ninety years of age”;<sup>364</sup> to parallel with the mother and the brothers, there is Blandina who was the last to die and stayed to eyewitness the other martyrdoms and a “boy of fifteen named Ponticus” who was martyred just before Blandina in her presence.<sup>365</sup> Yet, there are differences, too: unlike Eleazar, Pothinus was not respected for his old age;<sup>366</sup> Blandina herself is martyred, while the Maccabean mother has a very obscure death;<sup>367</sup> and Blandina and Ponticus are related only in Christ, not biologically, and they have no relation to Pothinus in any way, while in 4 Maccabees all the

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found in *Midrash Ekhah Rabbati (ER)* 1.16.50; the Babylonian Talmud, *b Gittin 57b (b Git 57b)*; *Pesikta Rabbati (PesR)* 43.4; and *Tanna debe Eliyahu: Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah (SER)* 30. For the abbreviations used, see Ch. 6.

<sup>361</sup> The story of the four hundred boys and girls is found in *b Git 57b* just before the story of the mother and her seven sons. The martyrdom of rabbi Aqiva is found in the Babylonian Talmud, *b Berakhot 61b*.

<sup>362</sup> DeSilva 2006, xxxi-vii; Ziadé considers 4 Maccabees a practical guide for martyrdom for the early Christians as it, in comparison to 2 Maccabees, takes the martyrdoms onto a whole new paradigmatic level; Ziadé 2007, 193.

<sup>363</sup> Ziadé 2007, 70-73.

<sup>364</sup> *Martyrs of Lyons* 29; Musurillo, 70. Cf. e.g. 4 Macc 5:4, and 2 Macc 6:18, 23.

<sup>365</sup> *Martyrs of Lyons* 53-55; Musurillo, 78. Cf. 4 Macc 8:3-4 and 2 Macc 7:1, 20-21, 41.

<sup>366</sup> *Martyrs of Lyons* 31; Musurillo, 70. Cf. 4 Macc 6:12-13 and 2 Macc 6:18, 21.

<sup>367</sup> *Martyrs of Lyons* 55; Musurillo, 78. Cf. 4 Macc 17:1 and 2 Macc 7:41.



martyrs are together and the brothers' relatedness to each other and their mother is emphasized.<sup>368</sup>

To exemplify where and how the implicit reception of the Maccabean martyrs may be shown, I present here a comparison between *Martyrs of Lyons* and 4 Maccabees.

***Martyrs of Lyons (54-55)***

"Ponticus, after being encouraged by his sister in Christ<sup>369</sup> so that

even the pagans realized that

she was urging him on and strengthening him [...]

The blessed Blandina was last of all:

like a noble mother

encouraging her children,<sup>371</sup> she sent them before her in triumph to the King, and then, after duplicating in her own body all her children's sufferings,

she hastened to rejoin them,

rejoicing and glorying in her death---<sup>372</sup>

***4 Maccabees***

For they constituted a holy chorus of religion and encouraged one another (13:8; cf. 2 Macc 7:5)

(cf. 4 Macc 12 and also 2 Macc 7:27)

But each child separately and all of them together the mother urged on to death<sup>370</sup> (15:12; cf. 2 Macc 7:21).

Although she witnessed the destruction of seven children and the ingenious and various rackings, this noble mother disregarded all these because of faith in God (15:24; cf. 2 Macc 7:20).

By these words the mother of the seven encouraged and persuaded each of her sons to die (16:24; cf. also 2 Macc 7:21).

[...] because of the many pains she suffered with each of them she had sympathy for them (15:7); How great and how many torments the mother then suffered as her sons were tortured (15:22).

[...] when she also was about to be seized and put to death she threw herself into the flames so that no one might touch her body (17:1).

[...] as you, who, after lighting the way of your star-like seven sons to piety, stand in honor before God and are firmly set in heaven with them (17:5).

Yet that holy and God-fearing mother did not wail with such a lament for any of them, [...] nor did she grieve as they were dying. On the contrary, as though having a mind like adamant [...] (16:12).

Without doubt, the most remarkable connective motives are found in the functions of Blandina compared to the Maccabean mother. The similarities in descriptive words should be noted among which, the most importantly, Blandina is acting

<sup>368</sup> In 4 Macc, the martyrs form a group as such, all standing in the same event of confrontation with the persecutor; 4 Macc 16:15-16. In 2 Macc, Eleazar and the rest of the martyrs are connected only vaguely (by a connecting verse 7:42, suggested by Doran 1980, 191).

<sup>369</sup> In the Greek text, it is simply ὁ μὲν γὰρ Ποντικός ὑπὸ τῆς ἀδελφῆς παρωρμημένος (Musurillo, 54). However, it hardly implies biological relationship.

<sup>370</sup> A similar verb is used of both Blandina and the mother: ὅτι ἐκείνη ἦν προτρεπομένη καὶ στηρίζουσα αὐτόν (Musurillo, 54); ἡ μήτηρ ἐπὶ τὸν τῆς εὐσεβείας προετρέπετο θάνατον (4 Macc 15:12) and also ὑπὲρ τῆς εὐσεβείας ἐπὶ τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ προετρέπετο (16:13).

<sup>371</sup> παρωρμήσασα τὰ τέκνα (Musurillo, 55); τῶν υἱῶν παρακαλοῦσα; 4 Macc 16:24.

<sup>372</sup> *Martyrs of Lyons* 54-55; Musurillo, 78-9.

“like a noble mother encouraging her children”.<sup>373</sup> That does not imply that she was Ponticus’ biological mother, as she is also depicted as his sister. In addition, she is not his mother but a mother of children in plural, which seems to include all exhorted to martyrdom. Finally, her martyrdom is duplicated: she is first martyred together with her children and then in rejoining them. As the comparison shows, all the features of Blandina’s motherhood have a precedent in the Maccabean mother, as she is reported to have acted in 4 Maccabees.<sup>374</sup>

However, I would emphasize that their resemblance is mainly functional and shown especially in her maternal relationship to other martyrs.<sup>375</sup> The speeches with sophisticated philosophical argumentation, which are impossible to ignore while reading 4 Maccabees, are not at all found in *Martyrs of Lyons*. In addition, at least the following deviations are found: in 4 Maccabees, all the martyrs encouraged one another, whereas in *Martyrs of Lyons* it seems that only Blandina did; in 4 Maccabees, the outsiders do not realize she is exhorting her last son to martyrdom,<sup>376</sup> while in Blandina’s case it is made manifest: “even the pagans realized that she was urging him on and strengthening him”; furthermore, the body of the Maccabean mother remains untouched, whereas Blandina is executed and, as a matter of fact, she is tortured together with Ponticus; and it is only Blandina, among the two, who dies rejoicing. In my opinion this shows that the model of a martyr’s mother, provided by the Maccabean mother, reflects in the figure of Blandina and functions given to her.<sup>377</sup> It does not necessitate a stronger reception of the Maccabean martyrs.

The persecution in Lyons took place already in the second half of the second century Common Era under Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus but, as noted earlier, the martyr account is preserved only in Eusebius’ *Historia Ecclesiastica*.<sup>378</sup> With regard to the figure of Blandina and her connections to the Maccabean mother, it is impossible to tell whether and how much Eusebius has edited his original material. I have suggested that Eusebius, while not referring to

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<sup>373</sup> Blandina is καθόπερ μητέρα εὐγενής (55) and the Maccabean mother ἡ γενναία μήτηρ (4 Macc 15:24). There is no equivalent in 2 Maccabees.

<sup>374</sup> The mother encourages her sons and leaves behind a honorable memory also in 2 Macc 7:5, 20-21. However, she is not a noble mother there; she does not feel the tortures in her body and is not reunited with her sons in heaven. These elements show that the author of *Martyrs of Lyons* has been under the influence of 4 Macc, not (only) 2 Macc.

<sup>375</sup> The similarities in vocabulary are not striking and in my opinion strict literary dependence cannot be shown.

<sup>376</sup> Because she does it in Hebrew, see 4 Macc 12:6-9.

<sup>377</sup> Somewhat similarly, although perhaps more vaguely, the figures of Pothinus and Ponticus reflect those of Eleazar and the brothers.

<sup>378</sup> Musurillo 1972, xx, xxii; Eusebius: *Hist. eccl.* 5.1.53-56; LCL 153, 432-434.

the Maccabean martyrs in connection with 4 Maccabees, had no firsthand knowledge of the martyrs in 4 Maccabees. I have claimed that the “similarities in the *Martyrs of Lyons* alone are not convincing enough for arguing that Eusebius was using 4 Maccabees”; rather, Eusebius may have simply approved of the ideas *Martyrs of Lyons* communicates, even highlighted them, without being associated with the Maccabean martyrdoms. As a conclusion, “in Eusebius’ mind, the Maccabees are not associated [exclusively, or at all] with the martyrs”.<sup>379</sup> If I am correct, we can conclude that Blandina, in the beginning of the fourth century, has features and functions remarkably similar to those of the Maccabean mother, as she is detailed in 4 Maccabees. Very likely, these features are not to be seen as Eusebius’ invention but were already found in his source material, composed in the late-second century.

Approximately at the same time with the composition of *Historia Ecclesiastica*, there are other martyr accounts which show that an explicit allusion to the Maccabees, even if solitary, seems to have carried within itself a contribution to the value and understanding of martyrdom. According to *Martyrdom of Saints Marian and James*, “Marian’s mother [...] rejoiced like the mother of the Maccabees”.<sup>380</sup> Similarly, in *Martyrdom of Saints Montanus and Lucius*, one of the martyred, had “at his side a mother of superior character” who, indeed, was “[a] mother of the race of Maccabees, no matter the number of her sons”.<sup>381</sup> One should notice that in these martyr narratives there is no need for introducing the Maccabees any further; no matter the amount or authenticity of the knowledge the implied reader was presumed to have, the Maccabees connect indisputably to Christian martyrdom and attribute an ideal character to the person concerned.<sup>382</sup> A reference indicates that the explicit reference to ‘the Maccabees’ had paradigmatic implications in the context of martyr writings. In the fourth century, explicit in these martyrdoms and echoed in *Historia Ecclesiastica*, we have a mother figure of the martyrs in paradigmatic functions: she should

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<sup>379</sup> See Ch. 3.4.1.

<sup>380</sup> *Marian and James* 13.1-2; Musurillo, 212. His peractis Machabaico gaudio Mariani Mater exultans et passione perfecta iam secura de filio, non illi tantum coeperat, sed et sibi, quae tale pignus ediderat, gratulari.

<sup>381</sup> *Montanus and Lucius* 16.4-5; Musurillo, 228, 230. o mater religiose piam! o matrem inter uetera exempla numerandam! o Machabaicam matrem! nihil enim interest de numero filiorum, cum perinde et haec in unico pignore totos affectus suos domino manciparit.

<sup>382</sup> In *Montanus and Lucius*, no parallel with the mother of Christ given but the reference to the mother of the Maccabees seems to provide a closer connection to the patriarchs, to Abraham more precisely (16.3; Musurillo, 228, 230). As there is no reference made to Abraham in relation to the mother in 2 Macc, this again points toward the influence of 4 Macc, in which she is connected to Abraham (e.g. in 17:6).

encourage, strengthen, and see off the martyrs to death; she carries their suffering in her body and is mystically martyred with them. Only in in comparison with a mother who sacrificed *several* sons, does Blandina become a mother of many, although encouraging at that point only Ponticus. Due to the same influential factor, the author of the *Martyrdom of Saints Montanus and Lucius* needs to add "no matter the number of her sons", apologetic of the noble deeds of a martyr's mother.<sup>383</sup>

I consider these examples of the implicit influence of the Maccabean martyrs (esp. 4 Maccabees) adequate to suggest a reception of the paradigmatic functions in relatively early Christian martyr texts.<sup>384</sup> Moving on, I present another example of the Maccabean echo in early Christian martyr texts among the earliest Christian texts we have, that is, the New Testament. These sources may very well be coeval with 4 Maccabees and thus give us a chance to focus on the influence of the martyrs of 2 Maccabees.<sup>385</sup> It is Hebrews which has evoked particular interest in this matter.<sup>386</sup> This example indicates that the reception of the Maccabean martyrs may be as old as are the first Christian texts.

The passage in Hebrews 11:34-38 constructs a praiseworthy continuum of anonymous faithful prophetic characters, figures who

"quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight" [...] "[W]omen received their dead by resurrection", (and) "[o]thers were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection". (They were) "persecuted, tormented" (and) "wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground".

Recently, van Henten has published a careful analysis of the reception of the Maccabean martyrs in these verses.<sup>387</sup> His conclusions show that verses 11:35-38

<sup>383</sup> *Martyrs of Lyons* 55; Musurillo, 78. *Montanus and Lucius* 16.5; Musurillo, 230.

<sup>384</sup> For other similar examples, see e.g. DeSilva 2006, xxxiv-vi; Ziadé 2007, 76-87. Among these sources it is very seldom one can distinguish between the influence of 2 and 4 Macc; Ziadé 2007, 69.

<sup>385</sup> DeSilva has argued for the mutual influence between 4 Macc and New Testament texts, in terms of common themes, literary and theological influence; DeSilva 2006, xxxii-iv. He mentions Hebrews and points out similarities in expressions and vocabulary between Heb 12:1-2 and 4 Macc. He does, however, not speak out which of the text would have influence the other; DeSilva 2006, xxxiii-iv. van Henten excludes 4 Macc from his analysis of reception because the studied text, Heb 11:33-38, was probably composed before, at least not later than 4 Macc; van Henten 2010a, 396, 371-2; on dating 4 Macc see also note 6 in van Henten 2010a, 360; and note 17 in van Henten 2010b, 337.

<sup>386</sup> van Henten lists relevant commentaries on Hebrews; van Henten 2010a, 360, see esp. n. 3. See also Goldstein 1984, 27.

<sup>387</sup> His article no longer deals with the question of whether there is reception or not; van Henten 2010a, 359-60. Regarding the Maccabean martyrdoms, the focus is on the literary dependence on 2 Macc 6:18-7:42.

are literary dependent on the account of 2 Maccabees.<sup>388</sup> The reception shows that the Maccabean martyrs were known and respected by the early Christian audience of Hebrews; as van Henten points out, it seems these witnesses were counted among the “prophets” in a broad sense and as prophets they were made precursors of Christ already around 100 CE.<sup>389</sup> As the reception of the Maccabean martyrs is made evident, based on the literary dependence, van Henten claims that Hebrews 11:37-38 is a case example of “a considerable interpretation”, in which “the heroes’ (that is, the Maccabean martyrs’) ethnic and cultural-religious identities are completely ignored” in it, by anonymizing, pluralizing and generalizing of their individual deeds.<sup>390</sup>

The purpose of Hebrews 11 is to provide the readers, who are in a situation of persecution,<sup>391</sup> with paradigmatic prophetic biblical witnesses to faith.<sup>392</sup> van Henten lists various functions for such a paradigmatic model: it provides prophetic consolation and encouragement,<sup>393</sup> it witnesses to Christ, and it exemplifies that faith may lead to suffering and a violent death.<sup>394</sup> By no means, one could argue against the suitability of the Maccabean martyrs into such a paradigm: they suffered a violent death because of their devotion and being biblical characters they can as well as any others precede Christ prophetically. Therefore, those who were “tortured”, “persecuted” and “tormented” may indeed resemble the Maccabean martyrs.

Now, it seems to me van Henten ignores the following allusions to those who “wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the

<sup>388</sup> van Henten 2010a, 372-3, 374-6. The expressions in Heb 11:35 for “tortured” (ἐτυμpanίσθησαν) and “refused to accept release” (οὐ προσδεξάμενοι τὴν ἀπολύτρωσιν) correspond to Eleazar in 2 Macc 6:18-19, 21-22, 28, 30; “persecuted, tormented” (ἐμπαγμῶν και μαστίγων) in 11:36 occur also in e.g. 2 Macc 7:1, 7, 38.

<sup>389</sup> van Henten 2010a, 365-6.

<sup>390</sup> van Henten 2010a, 376.

<sup>391</sup> According to van Henten, the actual threat is shown e.g. in Heb 10:32-34; 10:19-39; 12:4-15; van Henten 2010a, 363-4.

<sup>392</sup> The witnesses are identified by name in Heb 11:2-31. Verse 32 lists prophetic figures and the section including the Maccabean martyrs, 11:33-38, presents anonymous biblical figures. The paradigm is intensified in a description of Jesus Christ in 12:1-3, who is the ultimate witness and to whom all the previous witnesses witnessed; van Henten 2010a, 363-5.

<sup>393</sup> van Henten 2010a, 363-4. Similarly in 4 Macc, the model of the martyrs exemplifies endurance (4 Macc 16: 17, 19, 21) and encourages in the form of forerunners (16:20-21).

<sup>394</sup> van Henten 2010a, 364-5. According to van Henten, the reception of several figures in *Hebr.* 11:33-38 relies on a tradition, in which faith and prophecy are combined with violence and suffering in a context of persecution or war; in this tradition, a prophet is understood in a broader sense as anyone who had received revelation through the word of God and was acting as his representative and prophethood is often marked with violence; van Henten 2010a, 366, 368.

ground”.<sup>395</sup> Being aware of the rest of the heroes of the Maccabean Revolt, I find it rather fitting that the latter allusions are made with Judas Maccabeus and his companions in mind as they, too, “had been wandering in the mountains and caves”.<sup>396</sup> Receiving both the military and the martyred Maccabean heroes, Hebrews must have been influenced by 2 Maccabees as van Henten has suggested. It further shows that the author had an interest in making use of the Maccabean martyrs just as much as of other national heroes of the time, in constructing a prophetic heroic martyr-like ideal figure. The Maccabean martyrs – or any martyrs, for that matter – are not distinctively paradigmatic characters and their witness is not elevated any higher than other forms of bravery of the people of God. It is the theme of struggle, suffering and survival in the providence of God which the witness is made of, and thus Hebrews does not share the view of 4 Maccabees, according to which the martyrs were exclusively worth remembering.<sup>397</sup>

As a conclusion of this brief survey into early Christian martyr texts, one may confirm that the presence of the Maccabean martyrs is felt there from the very beginning. Already the author of Hebrews acknowledges the example of the Maccabean martyrs as paradigmatic models of faith; however, following 2 Maccabees, he does not give the martyrs a higher value among other paradigmatic heroes. This suggests that 2 Maccabees had influence on early Christian literature on its own, before the composition or reception of 4 Maccabees.

If *Martyrs of Lyons* is considered a contemporary source, it indicates that toward the end of the second century also the influence of 4 Maccabees shows. By the time the martyr account is received by Eusebius, Blandina’s character reflects an influence of a paradigmatic figure, identifiable as the mother of the Maccabean martyrs. I have claimed that Eusebius does not knowingly connect the features to the Maccabean martyrs, although at this point a more in-depth study is

<sup>395</sup> Heb 11:38. As a matter of fact, van Henten makes no mention of it, as he is focused on the reception of Dan 3 and 6 and 2 Macc 6:18-7:42.

<sup>396</sup> ἐπὶ ἐρημίαις πλανώμενοι καὶ ὄρεσιν καὶ σπηλαίοις καὶ ταῖς ὀπάϊς τῆς γῆς (Heb 11:38); μνημονεύοντες ὡς πρὸ μικροῦ χρόνου τὴν τῶν σκηνῶν ἐορτὴν ἐν τοῖς ὄρεσιν καὶ ἐν τοῖς σπηλαίοις θηρίων τρόπον (2 Macc 10:6). A somewhat similar reference is also found in 1 Macc 2:28 and in Josephus’ *A.J.* 12.6.2; LOEB 365, 140. As a matter of fact, Judas and his men would also count as those who “won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight” (Heb 11:34), as they were comparatively weak in number yet victorious. van Henten associates the allusions with earlier biblical prophets; van Henten 2010a, 366-7. If the author has built his continuum chronologically – which would make sense – the Maccabean military heroes would not fit in. As my concern is the Maccabean martyrs, I have not studied the option further.

<sup>397</sup> As the author’s concept of prophethood is broad, as van Henten has argued, the same can be said about his concept of martyrdom.

recommended. Theoretically, Eusebius could have recognized the paradigm, since other cases show that in the meanwhile “the Maccabees” has already functioned in Christian martyr literature as a valuable title or attribute by itself.

#### 4.1.2. The Maccabees as Role Models for Martyrs

According to 2 Maccabees, Eleazar gave a meaning to his death just before his execution: “[B]y bravely giving up my life now, I will [...] leave to the young a noble example of how to die”.<sup>398</sup> A couple of centuries later, his wish is made true. Moving beyond the influence of the Maccabean martyrs on early Christian martyrdom, this chapter exemplifies how the Maccabean martyrs’ example is made explicit in the Christian reception. The readers are introduced to the features of the Maccabean martyrs which were found encouraging for Christian soon-to-be martyrs. The analysis is restricted to two third century exhortations to martyrdom – *Ad Fortunatum* by Cyprian of Carthage and *Exhortatio ad martyrium* by Origen of Alexandria.<sup>399</sup> They both use the example of the Maccabean martyrs, as they are found in the Books of Maccabees, in order to exhort their readers to martyrdom. Cyprian addresses his readers with thirteen theses about the martyrs’ trials, accompanied with biblical examples among which the Maccabean martyrs are found,<sup>400</sup> and Origen writes an encouragement to his friends, who were cast in prison and about to be martyred, using the Maccabean martyrs as his only extensive biblical example.<sup>401</sup> I aim at finding out why and how these particular figures are used for the purposes of the authors. To conclude the analysis with a comparative observation, the readers are finally introduced to a Syriac Christian reception of the Maccabean martyrs, Aphrahat’s *Demonstration 21*.<sup>402</sup>

For both Cyprian and Origen, the Maccabean martyrs seem to be the most useful examples for their purposes. Cyprian provides the readers with a rather exhaustive list of biblical exemplary figures who are “the just and the good” and have always been “devoted to God by the law of innocence and by the fear of the

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<sup>398</sup> 2 Macc 6:27-28.

<sup>399</sup> Literally, Origen urges them to “say words such as these”, followed by a citation from 2 Macc 6:30; Origen: *Mart.* 22; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 20. Both Cyprian and Origen, even if addressing specific persons, write in a manner which is general in nature. *Exhortatio ad martyrium* is dated back to 235 CE; O’Meara 1954, 10. *Ad Fortunatum* to 257 CE; Deferrari 1958, 311.

<sup>400</sup> He refers to the Maccabean martyrs also in his letter to the people in Thibarais, encouraging them in trial and exhorting to martyrdom; Cyprian: Ep. 58.6; CCSL 3C, 327-8.

<sup>401</sup> Origen’s *Exhortatio ad martyrium* was written in 235 CE in Caesarea of Palestine; O’Meara 1954, 10. Literally, he urges them to “say words such as these”, followed by a citation from 2 Macc 6:30; Origen: *Exhortation 22*; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 20.

<sup>402</sup> According to the information provided by Aphrahat himself, *Demonstrations* are dated back to the 330s and 340s CE; Gwynn 1969, 153.

true religion”.<sup>403</sup> On top of his list, the Maccabean martyrs exemplify that “[n]othing new happens to the Christians, since from the beginning of the world the good have labored and been oppressed, and the just have been slain by the unjust”.<sup>404</sup> Hence, the Maccabean martyrs provide a link to the other biblical heroes and it is the continuum of the persecuted and the antiquity of the Maccabean martyrs which is found reassuring. The example of the Maccabean martyrs shows that martyrdom is life “dedicated and devoted to God” and Cyprian reassures that even if the glorious days of the Maccabees have passed by, the glory of the contemporary time is yet greater. He welcomes his readers to join the good and just “through the same testimonies of sufferings”, and reaffirms that “no one should think that it is difficult or hard to become a martyr”.<sup>405</sup>

Studying the example of the Maccabean martyrs more thoroughly, Cyprian states that they were meant to imitate “the manner of the Lord’s passion”.<sup>406</sup> However, Cyprian makes an interesting difference between his antique martyr models, the just and good in the past, and the contemporary martyrs under persecution: the former are already “numbered” but the latter cannot (yet) be counted so that their number is open for everyone to increase.<sup>407</sup> I believe this shows that Cyprian did distinguish between the pre-Christian devotion to God from Christian martyrdom; he does not aim at making the biblical heroes Christian. However, he urges that the example of the former pious is should be continued among Christians, and as a matter of fact, only among them. The argument thus implies that there are no martyrs among the contemporary Jews.

Origen intensively persuades his fellow Christians to glorious achievements by threatening them with eternal punishments<sup>408</sup> and bribing them with various compensations, both temporal and eternal.<sup>409</sup> In *Exhortatio ad martyrium*, the Maccabean martyrdoms are the only extensive biblical argument.<sup>410</sup> Unlike

<sup>403</sup> Cyprian: *Fort.* 11.61-65; CCSL 3:1, 203-4.

<sup>404</sup> Cyprian: *Fort.* 11.1-5; CCSL 3:1, 201. Cyprian’s list of biblical examples is extensive: Abel, Jakob, Joseph, David, Elias, Zacharias, the youths of Daniel; and Tobias and the Maccabean martyrs (apocryphal); Cyprian: *Fort.* 11.61-90; CCSL 3:1, 203-5.

<sup>405</sup> Cyprian: *Fort.* 11.213-232; CCSL 3:1, 210-1.

<sup>406</sup> Cyprian: *Fort.* 11.135-138; CCSL 3:1, 207.

<sup>407</sup> Cyprian: *Fort.* 11.216-219, 229-232; CCSL 3:1, 210-1. “[H]oc ampliorum gloriam computantes temporis nostril, quod cum uetera exempla numerentur, exuberante postmodum copia uirtutis ac fidei numerari non possunt martyres christiani” and, as a conclusion about the Christian amount of martyrs, “nemo difficile uel arduum putet esse martyrem fieri, quando uideat martyrum populum non posse numerari”.

<sup>408</sup> Origen: *Mart.* 19-21, 30, 34-35, 37, 39; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 18-9, 26-7, 29-37.

<sup>409</sup> Origen: *Mart.* 14-16, 30, 36, 38; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 14-5, 26-7, 33-6.

<sup>410</sup> Eleazar in *Mart.* 22 and the brothers and their mother in 23-27; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 19-24. Exhortation begins with a general exhortation to martyrdom (1-5) and is



Cyprian, he is not concerned with the antiquity of the martyrs but with their qualities. Introducing the brothers, Origen calls them an “admirable example of heroic martyrdom”.<sup>411</sup> When he quotes his source (2 Maccabees), he focuses on the arguments of the brothers. The whole narration of Eleazar’s martyrdom, whose noble example is highlighted, is about what he thought and said.<sup>412</sup> In his analysis of Origen’s reception, van Henten has confirmed that Origen, although always quoting 2 Maccabees, was much influenced by 4 Maccabees and especially its philosophical ethos.<sup>413</sup>

van Henten suggests that Origen uses these paradigmatic figures because they were already known to his readers and because there already prevailed “a fixed tradition about the Maccabean martyrs as forerunners of Christian martyrs”.<sup>414</sup> I assume that, by the existing fixed tradition, he refers to texts such as Hebrews 11,<sup>415</sup> to Origen himself or alike.<sup>416</sup> I consider the material not exhaustive enough for arguing for a fixed tradition, especially if Origen’s *Exhortatio* both derives from it and stands as one of the few pieces of evidence for it. Instead, I would look at the reasons Origen himself gives for his choice: “I think that in view of our present purpose it was most useful to give here this story from the Scriptures”.<sup>417</sup> In other words, Origen found the Maccabean martyrs suitable for his project and considered them to be biblical.

First, his purpose being to persuade his readers to martyrdom, Origen is naturally in search for incontestable persuasive arguments. His view of martyrdom is defined by reverence toward God (εὐσέβεια) and endurance (ὑπομονή), which by his time are admirable Christian virtues, philosophical in

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followed by warnings against idolatry (6-10). Thereafter, Origen emphasizes endurance in trials, by referring to the duty of the Christians to bear their cross (11-21) and to examples of martyrdom (22-28; our section). Finally, he describes various kinds of martyrdom (28-44), returns to questions of idolatry (45-46) and exhortations to endurance under persecution (47-50); O’Meara 1954, 12.

<sup>411</sup> Origen: *Mart.* 23; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 20.

<sup>412</sup> He follows the account of 2 Macc (6:18-31) faithfully but all the details are presented in a philosophical manner, as if Origen were in Eleazar’s head. Eleazar’s death was his voluntary decision, which he made deliberately, “[r]easoning in a noble-minded manner”; Origen: *Mart.* 22; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 19-20.

<sup>413</sup> Basing his arguments on DeSilva’s commentary on 4 Macc (2004) and his own comparative reading, he stresses on the similarities between Origen’s *Mart.* and 4 Macc; van Henten 2010b, 341-343.

<sup>414</sup> van Henten 2010b, 336.

<sup>415</sup> See Ch. 4.1.1.

<sup>416</sup> Cyprian’s *Fort.* was composed only a couple of decades after Origen’s *Mart.*. In Origen, there are several other references made to the Maccabean martyrs; listed in note 22 in Vinson 1994, 172. In addition, the implicit influence discussed in Ch. 4.1. should be taken into account here.

<sup>417</sup> νομιζῶ δὲ καὶ ταῦτα χρησιμώτατα πρὸς τὸ προκειμένον ἐπιτεμόμενος ἀπὸ τῆς γραφῆς παρατεθεῖσθαι; Origen: *Mart.* 27; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 23. Origen: *Mart.* 22-23; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 19-20.

nature, and conveniently used exhaustively in 4 Maccabees.<sup>418</sup> So, in εὐσέβεια and ὑπομονή Origen has found something which can be considered worthy of pursuit. Furthermore, as Origen's addressees need to be not only exhorted but also converted to martyrdom, the voluntary aspect of martyrdom must be highlighted.<sup>419</sup> Again, the Maccabean martyrs provide both the example (a learned old man Eleazar) and a model (the brothers) challenging to action: who would let oneself "to be outstripped by mere children"?<sup>420</sup> On top of all this, Origen considers the Maccabean martyrdoms to be biblical.<sup>421</sup> In my opinion, the Maccabean martyrs are useful for Origen's purposes exactly because they embody these admirable and voluntary aspects of martyrdom with philosophically persuasive arguments. In addition, because they were biblical to him, he may have counted on their authority more than on non-scriptural martyr accounts.

To conclude the discussion on the Maccabean martyrs and Christian literature in the context of martyrdom, I briefly take up the *Demonstration 21*, written in 344 CE by Aphrahat, one of the better-known Syriac Christian authors about persecutions.<sup>422</sup> According to Gwynn, the works of Aphrahat are not really affected by external influences, that is, apparently, from Western Christianity.<sup>423</sup> As a conclusion of his demonstration, Aphrahat lists the "names of martyrs, of confessors, and of the persecuted", following carefully the continuum of martyrs constructed in Hebrews 11.<sup>424</sup> Interestingly, in contrast to his source of inspiration, Aphrahat reveals the identity of the witnesses and just before escalating to the praise of the excellent martyrdom of Jesus, he declares that

"Judas Maccabeus and his brethren were persecuted, and they also endured reproach. The seven brethren, sons of the blessed woman, endured torments by bitter scourging, and were confessors

<sup>418</sup> van Henten lists close parallels between words which define martyrdom throughout Origen's *Mart.* and 4 Macc: reverence toward God (εὐσέβεια); see e.g. 4 Macc 5:24; *Mart.* 22; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 19). endurance (ὑπομονή); see e.g. 4 Macc 9:6; 16:1, 17:7, 10, 23; *Mart.* 23, 26; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 20, 23; examples are listed in van Henten 2010b, 324. See also van Henten 2010b, 345.

<sup>419</sup> van Henten 2010b, 344. Origen asks, "[w]at dead person could be more deserving of praise than he who of his own choice elected to die for his religion? Such a one was Eleazar"; Origen: *Mart.* 22; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 19.

<sup>420</sup> ὑπόδειγμα in quote from 2 Macc 6:31 (see also 4 Macc 9:10), Origen: *Mart.* 22; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 20; παράδειγμα ῥωμαλέου μαρτυρίου, Origen: *Mart.* 23; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 20.

<sup>421</sup> Origen: *Mart.* 27; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 23. Also in Exh 23, Origen makes an explicit reference to the Scripture (ἡ γραφή) found in the (books of) Maccabees (ἐν τοῖς Μακκαβαϊκοῖς); Origen: *Mart.* 23; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 20. Even if only 2 Macc was canonical to him, he had read 4 Macc, too; van Henten 2010b, 343, 351.

<sup>422</sup> Ephraem and Aphrahat are the best known authors of home-grown Syriac literature and among the two, Aphrahat was not at all as popular as Ephraem; Gwynn 1969, 119, 153.

<sup>423</sup> Gwynn 1969, 119.

<sup>424</sup> Aphrahat: *Dem.* 21.22-23. The expression "cloud of confessors" is found in Heb 11:1 and Dem. 11.23.

and true martyrs, and Eleazar, aged and advanced in years as he was, proved a noble example and made (his) confession and became a true martyr.”<sup>425</sup>

Making explicit the reception of the Maccabean martyrs in Hebrews, Aphrahat’s demonstration confirms our conclusions about it. In line with my suggestion, Aphrahat identifies all the Maccabean heroes, not only the martyrs, in the allusions. To have them all count as persecuted, he does not highlight their military efforts but focuses on their endurance and lays emphasis on the martyrs, whom he regards as “confessors and true martyrs”. However, even in Aphrahat, as well as in Origen and Cyprian, the Maccabean martyrs function as paradigmatic examples among and in line with other biblical examples. Thus far, their identity derives from their canonical position.

#### **4.1.3. The Relatedness of the Maccabean Martyrs to Jewish (Ideas of) Martyrdom**

The Maccabean martyrs have a prominent, if disputed, position within the study of early Christian martyrdom. The same cannot be said about their relatedness to Jewish/Rabbinic martyrdom, which has often been studied – as well as defined – with and against Christian concepts of martyrdom.<sup>426</sup> The relatedness of the Maccabean martyrs with the Jewish ideas of martyrdom is thus a complex issue and already the title of the chapter raises questions, such as: why the brackets? what are those ideas and what makes them particularly Jewish? what is implied by the plural?

My purpose here is not to provide the readers with a comprehensive history of Jewish martyrdom, I do not even aim at a conclusive definition of it (hence the plural!). Because of the focus of my study, I am concerned with the issues of Jewish martyrdom only as far as the Maccabean martyrs are related. First, I turn to the question of origin: Do the Maccabean martyrs mark the beginning of Jewish martyrdom or not? Secondly, I present the Rabbinic reception of the Maccabean martyrdoms: the readers are first generally introduced to all the four versions of the mother and her seven sons found in classic Rabbinic literature; thereafter, to the versions in *Ekhah Rabbati* and *b Gittin 57b*, in comparison with 2 (and 4) Maccabees; and lastly, the version in *b Gittin 57b* is compared with other Rabbinic martyr narratives.

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<sup>425</sup> Aphrahat: *Dem.* 21.22.

<sup>426</sup> There is no word in Hebrew comparable to the Greek/Latin martyr; van Henten 1997, 6. Neither is there a comparable body of martyr literature in Judaism; van Henten & Avemarie 2002, 132. .

The Rabbinic correspondent to Christian martyrdom, the “Jewish martyrdom”, is developed under a command to sanctify God’s name, *kiddush ha-Shem*.<sup>427</sup> Although often compared, the two do not quite correspond with one another, as by definition, sanctification of God’s name does not necessitate or encourage a person to die, although following the command can sometimes unavoidably lead to death.<sup>428</sup> Lamm & Ben-Sasson claim that “the first explicit expression (of *kiddush ha-Shem*) occurred during the confrontation of Judaism with Hellenism the first pagan culture with ‘missionary’ and synthesizing tendencies” as “under Antiochus Epiphanes, Hellenization employed violent and coercive methods in regard to Jews”.<sup>429</sup> The claim implies that *kiddush ha-Shem* is fundamentally and functionally about a perseverance of an identity, a means of survival, and that one finds the Judean Jews persecuted and martyred by Antiochus making it explicit. Lamm & Ben-Sasson conclude that “the laws of martyrdom were formulated” at the “famous Rabbinical council in Lydda (second century)”.<sup>430</sup> If this is the origin of Jewish martyrdom, one may conclude that the Maccabean martyrs are an essential part of it and that the Rabbis after the second century do not seem to have had much influence on it.

If this is the case, one may find it peculiar that none of the four Rabbinic versions of the mother and her seven sons are placed in the connection with a historical description of the Maccabean Revolt but in the context of the persecution during the Roman Era. As a matter of fact, the persecutions by Roman emperors provide the performative context of most of the Rabbinic martyr narratives.<sup>431</sup> The Babylonian Talmud, for example, describes it in the following way: it is “the cry caused by the Emperor Hadrian who killed in Alexandria of Egypt sixty myriads on sixty myriads”, “the cry caused by the Emperor Vespasian

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<sup>427</sup> My understanding of the concept derives from the article, “Kiddush ha-Shem and Hīllul Ha-Shem”, in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* by Lamm & Ben-Sasson (2007), with a complementary view provided by Rajak 2001 (1997).

<sup>428</sup> Yet, the following rules would abide a Jew: If forced to violate the commandments against idolatry, unchastity, and murder, a Jew should rather choose to die. Also, if forced to violate any commandments in the presence of more than ten Jews, he should also rather die. When a whole community of Jews was persecuted, one should rather die than violate any commandments even if no other Jews were present; Lamm & Ben-Sasson 2007, 140-1. Even the most simplistic definition of martyrdom within Christianity requires a person’s death. For a simple definition, see e.g. van Henten & Avemarie 2002, 2-3.

<sup>429</sup> Lamm & Ben-Sasson 2007, 142. Also the youth in Daniel are mentioned among the earliest Jews who were forced to worship an idol.

<sup>430</sup> Lamm & Ben-Sasson 2007, 140, 143-4. Likewise, Flusser suggests that the earliest sources in reference to Jewish martyrdom appear in the time of the Hasmoneans; Flusser 2009, 248.

<sup>431</sup> van Henten & Avemarie 2002, 132, 135; Herr 2007c, 641. The notion of a ‘performative context’ has been discussed above in Ch. 2.3.

who killed in the city of Bethar four hundred thousand myriads”, and “this is the Government of Rome which has destroyed our House and burnt our Temple and driven us out of our land”.<sup>432</sup> Hasan-Rokem confirms that it is this cry, the lament and recovery from the destruction of the temple and the loss of hopes for national independence and unity, which stands at the heart of the Rabbinic literature.<sup>433</sup> As a result of this enquiry, we have found two competitive contexts for the origins of Jewish martyrdom; to add to the excitement, we encounter the Maccabean martyrs in both of them.

Now, Urbach explains the importance of the Roman context by claiming that Emperor Hadrian was the first to make the Jews suffer and die because of nothing else but their obedience to their laws. However, the Books of Maccabees<sup>434</sup> make it very clear that the Jews were killed because of their religion already during the Maccabean Revolt.<sup>435</sup> Urbach continues explaining that the Roman persecutions presented a theological dilemma to the Rabbis because the Romans had made the Jews suffer and die *without* a reason. As the Rabbis considered their people innocent of the suffering they were subjected to, they could no longer interpret it as a warning or punishment given by God.<sup>436</sup> In contrast, the martyrs in 2 (and 4) Maccabees seem to have been very well aware of the cause of *their* people’s suffering: that is because of the sins of the nation.<sup>437</sup>

The dilemma echoes in several dialogues of the Rabbis, but it is especially attested to rabbi Aqiva who accepted the unaccountable suffering with love and thus had a radical role in transforming the Jewish thought. According to Urbach, rabbi Aqiva’s “acceptance of suffering is voided of its reason and significance, if it is explained as a punishment for any sin”.<sup>438</sup> The Rabbis experienced the Roman persecution as impenetrable, while the Maccabean martyrs saw a purpose in their sacrifice. The Rabbis solved the problem of meaningless and thus innocent suffering by making the victims into martyrs. 2 (or 4) Maccabees do not include such a solution as they do not consider the suffering and death problematic. It is

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<sup>432</sup> *b Git 57b*. For the confusion in the names of the Roman emperors, see note 5 in Simon 1969, 266.

<sup>433</sup> Hasan-Rokem 2000, 110-1.

<sup>434</sup> Even if only 1 Macc is taken into account.

<sup>435</sup> 4 Macc itself vividly evidences that the Maccabean Revolt and its martyrs were not forgotten by the first/second centuries.

<sup>436</sup> Urbach 1975, 442.

<sup>437</sup> 2 Macc 7:18; 4 Macc 17:21.

<sup>438</sup> Urbach 1975, 443-4. Rabbi Aqiva is one of the most famous of the Ten Martyrs; van Henten & Avemarie 2002, 137. The Ten Martyrs consist of a legendary compilation of Rabbis who were martyred under the Romans during the first two centuries CE; Herr 2007c, 640-1.

reasonable to argue that the notion of *kiddush ha-Shem* either arises from the Rabbinic Era or is rooted in the Maccabean Revolt, as both explanations cannot hold together. Indeed, Urbach's emphasis on the Roman persecutions of the Jews ignores the Maccabean origin of the Jewish martyrdom, while Lamm & Ben-Sasson try to locate the Rabbinic notion into a pre-Rabbinic Era. Interestingly, the mother and her seven martyred sons are related to both interpretations of origin: they are the paradigmatic martyrs of the Maccabean Revolt and they are received by the Rabbis within the context of Roman persecution. To underline the case, only the mother and her seven sons are counted among the archetypical martyrs of Rabbinic Judaism with the Ten Martyrs to whom rabbi Aqiva belongs.<sup>439</sup>

Now, thematically the Maccabean martyrs may be related to *kiddush ha-Shem*. However, as the term, *kiddush ha-Shem*, is frequently used in the Jewish sources only from the third century onwards, its application to the Maccabean martyrdoms is not unproblematic.<sup>440</sup> Rajak has remarked that the traditions of *kiddush ha-Shem* and Christian martyrdom influenced each other during the Middle Ages, which has led many modern scholars to treat them as comparable phenomena. As a result, the Rabbinic concept *kiddush ha-Shem* is anachronistically projected into Antiquity in a form which it has reached only much later.<sup>441</sup> As a matter of fact, this seems to be the case of Lamm & Ben-Sasson, who date the "first explicit expression" of *kiddush ha-Shem* back to the second century before the Common Era. It cannot be taken literally, because they claim that the concept has "always been implicit in the Judaic faith and view of life".<sup>442</sup>

The Maccabean martyrs' relatedness to *kiddush ha-Shem* seems to have intensified, if not appeared, by time. It is as anachronistic to claim that they died as an explicit expression of *kiddush ha-Shem* as to claim that they died in imitation of Christ. However, once these ideas of martyrdom become established, it is natural to discover them also in the Maccabean martyrdoms in both Judaism

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<sup>439</sup> The mother and her seven sons are explicitly identified as the Maccabean martyrs (those found in 2 Macc 7) only in later works on Judaism; see e.g. Urbach 1975, 652-3; Lamm & Ben-Sasson 2007, 142-3; note 4 in Simon's translation of *b Git*, Simon 1936, 267; and Flusser 2009. Nevertheless, they are still often referred to only as the mother and her seven sons when the Rabbinic accounts are discussed; e.g. Boyarin 1999.

<sup>440</sup> van Henten & Avemarie 2002, 3, 132. Somewhat curiously, earlier in *PesR* 43.4, a story is told about Abraham and Sarah, in which Sarah's barrenness is discussed. In it, the nations of the world seem to have questioned her biological motherhood and thus Abraham tells her to to uncover herself (to bare her pouring nipples) "for the hallowing of the Name"; קְדוּשַׁת הַשֵּׁם.

<sup>441</sup> Rajak 2001 (1997), 102-3.

<sup>442</sup> Lamm & Ben-Sasson 2007, 142.

and Christianity. This reflects not only the continuous/increasing importance of the Maccabean martyrs but also the flexibility of religious thought. Therefore, I cautiously reject the possibility of direct relatedness between *kiddush ha-Shem* and the Maccabean martyrs. Instead, I turn to investigate their Rabbinic reception: if the Maccabean martyrs are related to the development of the ideas of Jewish martyrdom in antiquity, the Rabbis should have touched upon the issue and their reception should thus provide us with hints of how that connection works.<sup>443</sup>

#### 4.1.4. A Comparison with Rabbinic Martyrs Narratives

First of all, one may ask why the Rabbis placed the martyrdoms in the context of Roman persecution. I cannot offer a better answer than that the timing of Hadrian's persecution – or the Roman persecutions in general – was felicitous in nourishing the arising ideologies of Jewish martyrdom as it concurred with the religious national crisis of Jews, the destruction of the Second Temple and beginning of the new exile.<sup>444</sup> In comparison to that, the Maccabean Revolt was not as traumatic, since it resulted in success and victory.<sup>445</sup>

Having been located in the Roman context, the mother and her seven sons are taken into the Rabbinic discussion of innocent suffering introduced above. van Henten & Avemarie claim that the Rabbinic versions show in accordance with 2 Maccabees that the martyred brothers believed they died because of their own transgressions.<sup>446</sup> If so, the description of the brothers in Rabbinic versions would oppose to the solution modeled by Rabbi Aqiva, as the Rabbis could continue to explain their suffering with the “old paradigm”, as God's punishment.<sup>447</sup> However, against van Henten & Avemarie's observations, I find such a statement

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<sup>443</sup> van Henten & Avemarie believe that a tradition underlying the Rabbinic versions is 2 Macc 7 and 4 Macc 8-18; van Henten & Avemarie 2002, 135-6. See also Flusser 2009, 248. This is also the starting point of my study; see e.g. Ch. 1.2. However, it is also possible that the Rabbis of the first centuries never received 2 Macc and thus must have come across the Maccabean martyrdoms in some other way; see, for example, an evaluation of the connectedness between the Books of Maccabees with the version in *ER*, which “is based not only on its source in 2 Maccabees but also on the account and significance given to it in 4 Maccabees; however it is clear that neither was directly used by the author or redactor”; Herr 2007b, 452.

<sup>444</sup> Of course, also Christian ideologies of martyrdom began to flourish by that time.

<sup>445</sup> Furthermore, the Pharisees, whom the Rabbis would succeed, were never the greatest supporters of the Hasmonean dynasty Stern & Bayer 2007, 446; see also Stemmerger 1992, 201 or Ch. 3.2.1. in this study, for the lack appreciation of the Rabbis in regard to the history of the Maccabean Revolt.

<sup>446</sup> van Henten & Avemarie 2002, 136. They make a reference to 2 Macc 7:18, 32, 38.

<sup>447</sup> This should not be confused with the old and new paradigms of Jewish-Christian origins, as defined by Boyarin; Boyarin 1999, 1-6. What it implies here is a reference to Urbach, who claims that before the Rabbis, suffering and death were always received as either a warning or a punishment from God; Urbach 1975, 442.

only in *Ekhah Rabbati*, not in *b Gittin 57b* or *Pesikta Rabbati*.<sup>448</sup> Thus, it seems to me that 2 Maccabees and *Ekhah Rabbati* typify the “old paradigm”, whereas in the rest of the Rabbinic versions the Maccabean martyrs are fashioned in accordance with the “radically transformed” Jewish thought: their suffering is not explained away with anything. These variations confirm that the question of whether suffering can be innocent or whether it always is a comment on wrongdoings is in a process of modification during the Rabbinic reception of the Maccabean martyrs.

Moving on, I introduce the Rabbinic versions of the Maccabean martyrdoms. While all the Rabbinic versions of the martyrdom of the mother and her seven sons are presented in the context of Roman persecutions, they also have scriptural connections. I believe these connections offer us a way to approach their reception as well as the foundational experience of martyrdom in the early Rabbinic Era more comprehensively. In *Pesikta Rabbati*, the story is commented with a Psalm verse, “He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children”,<sup>449</sup> and, as a matter of fact, each Rabbinic version concludes with calling her a joyful mother. In addition, in *b Gittin 57b*, the story exemplifies another Psalm verse, “Because of you we are being killed all day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter”;<sup>450</sup> in *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah*, “O God, the nations have come into your inheritance; they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins”;<sup>451</sup> and, finally, *Ekhah Rabbati* connects the story with the verse, “For these things I weep”.<sup>452</sup> Key words for understanding the scriptural connection of the Rabbinic receptions are destruction, lamentation, and barrenness; all of which stand among the core themes of the Mishnaic-Talmudic literature, coping with the destruction of the temple and its aftermath.<sup>453</sup> Without exceptions, the Rabbinic reception of the Maccabean martyrdoms emphasizes the figure of the mother, as the themes of lament, national destruction, and martyrdom are tied together in her destiny together with her sons.

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<sup>448</sup> Indeed, in *ER* 1.16.50, the boy explains why God will not rescue him: because they are at fault and because the king is so cruel. However, in *PesR* 43.4, nothing alike is suggested, and in *b Git* 57b I cannot point out anything, apart from the quote of the last son, Deut 26:17-18, with which a reference to the covenant between God and his people is made. Even that does not indicate that the people would have earned the persecution onto themselves. In *SER* 30, which is not included in van Henten & Avemarie, the martyrs neither take the blame on themselves.

<sup>449</sup> Ps 113:9. The larger context of the passage is a homily on Hannah, verse 1 Sam 2:21.

<sup>450</sup> Ps 44:22.

<sup>451</sup> Ps 79:1.

<sup>452</sup> Lam 1:16.

<sup>453</sup> Hasan-Rokem 2000, 12-3, 110-1.



Among the Rabbinic versions, *b Gittin 57b* and *Ekhah Rabbati 1.16.50* appear in connection with other martyr narratives.<sup>454</sup> However thematically, the martyr narratives in *Ekhah Rabbati* are not driven by a paradigmatic heroic martyr but by “powerful emotionality”, paradigmatic weeping and the feminine power of laments, as defined by Hasan-Rokem.<sup>455</sup> Lamentation is religiously motivated reaction to wrongs and injustice and despair,<sup>456</sup> and the role of the lamenter belongs traditionally to a woman, either a widow or a bereaved mother.<sup>457</sup> The question is thus about the mere ability to cope with suffering and survival. In comparison to 2 (or 4) Maccabees’ account of the martyrdom, such an approach is special as they both elevate the examples of heroic martyrdom.

Thematically, *b Gittin 57b* seems to be pulled together of bloody scenes, some of which relate to martyrdom. It provides us with the story of the woman and her seven sons, structured in the way which is generally typical of all Rabbinic versions. Therefore, I have chosen it for a comparison where I attempt to find similarities and differences first between the Rabbinic version and those of 2 and 4 Maccabees, and secondly, among three martyr narratives, all found in the Babylonian Talmud.<sup>458</sup> The comparison aims at finding out if the differences between the accounts in 2 (and 4) Maccabees and *b Gittin 57b* are connected with a more evolved concept of Rabbinic martyrdom, represented by the other martyr narratives.

In *b Gittin 57b*, the woman and her seven sons are first taken captive without making explicit any possible cause. The sons are one after another compelled by the Emperor himself to “serve the idol”. Each brother answers with

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<sup>454</sup> *b Git 57b* as a whole does not have much to do with the theme of martyrdom: According to Simon, its main theme is “the validity of the document which effects divorce”, Chapter 5 deals with various regulations, such as, regulations made “in the interest of peace”; Simon 1936, xi. In *ER 1.16*, there are several martyr narratives but little order or system in the structure of the section as a whole. Therefore the context provides only a very general thematic link to explain why the story of the Maccabean martyrs is inserted in it. Such a link may be Hadrian (mentioned in *ER 1.16.45*), or the combination of several stories about women’s suffering in general (*ER 1.16.45*), or about women called Miriam in particular (*ER 1.16.47-50*, of which 50 is about the Maccabees).

<sup>455</sup> For the concept of strength and its transformation, see Hasan-Rokem 2000, 113-4.

<sup>456</sup> A lamenter, by definition, “recognizes God as the source of his suffering, and acknowledges his sinfulness in a general way, as part of being human, but he does not see his suffering as just punishment for his sin. Rather, he finds the extent of God’s anger incomprehensible; his only hope is that crying out in his wretchedness will evoke God’s compassion”; Tigay & Cooper & Bayer 2007, 449.

<sup>457</sup> Hasan-Rokem 2000, 111.

<sup>458</sup> One is picked out simply because it is also found in *b Git 57b* and the other, martyrdom of rabbi Aqiva, because it is a classic among the Rabbinic martyr texts.

a biblical argument which “is written in the Torah”.<sup>459</sup> As a contrast to the first six, a profound dialogue takes place between the Emperor and the last son: the Emperor tries to persuade the boy by coarse means but the boy stands firm.<sup>460</sup> Just before the execution of her last son, the mother – who has been passive so far – enters the scene; in *b Gittin 57b*, she does not try to prevent the execution but wishes to say goodbyes, and she is given permission.<sup>461</sup> The sons are executed and then *b Gittin 57b* reports that “she also went up on to a roof and threw herself down and was killed”.<sup>462</sup>

The basic structure of the Rabbinic version is similar to that of 2 Maccabees 7. However, even a superficial comparison shows that there are differences between the martyrdoms. I want to point out a few of them. First, *b Gittin 57b* does not inform the readers about the cause of the persecution; the pork-eating as the symbol of transgression is turned into idolatry; the biblical quotes are different and in *b Gittin 57b* each is attached with the repetitive “it is written in the Torah”; and lastly, the mother commits a suicide. Before making any conclusions based on this comparison, I briefly introduce the two other martyr narratives.

Preceding the story of the Maccabean martyrdoms in *b Gittin 57b*, a peculiar occasion of martyrdom is reported: four hundred boys and girls are taken captive and “carried off for immoral purposes”. After negotiations, the children conclude that they should rather be drowned in the sea than consent. Once the oldest of them has encouraged them with biblical quotes, all the girls throw themselves into the sea and the boys follow their example.<sup>463</sup> Two important points of connection between the martyr accounts in *b Gittin 57b* are the following: the martyrs are anonymous children, about whom the readers know nothing else but the fact that

<sup>459</sup> Characteristic of all the Rabbinic versions is the repetitive style the first six brothers are presented with; van Henten & Avemarie 2002,136-7. The versions vary only partially in the quotations attested to each brother; only in *PesR* 43.4, none of the brothers quote the Torah.

<sup>460</sup> In *b Git 57b*, the emperor says, “I will throw down my seal before you and you can stoop down and pick it up, so that they will say of you that you have conformed to the desire of the king”, to which the boy firmly answers: “Fie on thee, Caesar, fie on thee, Caesar”. Similar scene takes place in *ER* 1.16.50; *SER* 30. In *PesR* 43.4, there is no offer of ruse. In 2 Macc, the ruse is found in 2 Macc 6:21-22 (and 4 Macc 7:12-15; 6:15), related to Eleazar’s martyrdom, and not in 2 Macc 7. This may indicate that the martyrdom of Eleazar (2 Macc 6:18-31) was not just lost but perhaps left out; however, the ruse motif was kept and thus embedded in the martyrdom of the sons.

<sup>461</sup> At this point, the Rabbinic versions vary: *b Git 57b*. In *ER* 1.16.50 and *SER* 30, she nurses her son. In *PesR* 43.4, the last son asks the emperor for permission to take counsel at his mother.

<sup>462</sup> *b Git 57b*. Again, there are slight variations among versions of the mother’s death: cf. *ER* 1.16.50; *SER* 30. Only in *PesR*, the mother is executed like her sons; *PesR* 43.4.

<sup>463</sup> *b Git 57b*. The mass suicide of the children is commented with a Psalm verse, “Because of you we are being killed all day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter” (Ps 44:22), relating their deaths to execution and slaughter. However, according to a rabbi Judah, the particular verse refers to the woman and her seven sons, whose martyrdom follows immediately.

they were driven by an urge to obey the Torah even until their deaths, and secondly, the children as well as the mother of the seven boys commit suicide instead of being slaughtered.

Another kind of point of comparison is provided by rabbi Aqiva, perhaps the most famous of the martyr-Rabbis.<sup>464</sup> According to the Babylonian Talmud, “the Wicked Kingdom”<sup>465</sup> forbade Israel to occupy itself with the Torah and rabbi Aqiva was arrested because he did not comply, that is, there is a reason given for why he is arrested. During his execution, the daily time to recite the *Shema*<sup>466</sup> came and even then, while “they were combing his flesh with combs of iron

[...] he took upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven.

His disciples said to him: “Our rabbi, even to this point?”

He said to them: “All my days I have been troubling myself about this verse: *With all your soul* (this means) even if He takes your soul. I said, When shall I have the opportunity to fulfill this?

And now that I have the opportunity, should I not fulfill it?”<sup>467</sup>

And this is the way he is martyred: happily while reciting the *Shema*.<sup>468</sup> Because of his loyalty to the Torah and the one and only God, not seeking death but calmly ignoring the pain and happily receiving the opportunity of martyrdom. Urbach has argued that it is rabbi Aqiva who influenced Jewish martyrdom the most: “Although [...] the religious persecution came to a close, yet the example set by rabbi Aqiva, demonstrating that we are enjoined to die for the sanctification of the Name, remained”.<sup>469</sup> As a matter of fact, the pivotal idea of Aqiva’s martyrdom is to die “out of love for God”, related to Deut 6:5, the Jewish confession of faith.<sup>470</sup>

The version of the Maccabean martyrs in *b Gittin 57b* shows to have been influenced by an element which is also characteristic of rabbi Aqiva’s martyrdom: the Torah especially connected with worship of God, not with food regulations. However, the cause of rabbi Aqiva’s martyrdom is made explicit while in the case of the mother and her sons it is not told; rabbi Aqiva’s martyrdom is not about insane suffering but about committing to the *Shema*. Finally, the pivotal idea, the dying out of love for God, is found in the martyrdom of the mother and her seven sons only as the mother dies in despair after having lost her beloved sons. Of

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<sup>464</sup> There are several versions of rabbi Aqiva’s martyrdom in the Rabbinic literature but, for the sake of comparison, I use the one found in the BT, that is, in *b Berakhot 61b*.

<sup>465</sup> It refers to the Roman Empire; see van Henten & Avemarie 2002, 154, n. 116.

<sup>466</sup> That is, Deut 6:5. see van Henten & Avemarie 2002, 139, n. 34.

<sup>467</sup> *b Berakhot 61b*.

<sup>468</sup> “He prolonged (the word) *one* until his soul departed at (the word) *one*. A heavenly voice went forth and said: “Happy are you, rabbi Aqiva, that your soul departed at (the word) *one*”; *b Berakhot 61b*.

<sup>469</sup> Urbach 1975, 444. Note the reference to *kiddush ha-Shem*.

<sup>470</sup> van Henten & Avemarie 2002, 151.

course, one finds the mother's figure and actions in strong contrast with those of rabbi Aqiva and it is difficult to take the mother's example as paradigmatic, especially when suicidal action was not favored by the Rabbis,<sup>471</sup> while rabbi Aqiva, as a well-known and respected teacher, clearly sets an example to his followers. This leads me to conclude that the martyrdom of the mother and her seven sons, not only in 2 (and 4) Maccabees but also in their Rabbinic reception, serve different purposes than the martyrdom of rabbi Aqiva.

Boyarin has contrasted "late antique martyrdom as a practice of both Rabbinic Jews and Christians" with the Maccabean martyrdoms. He holds that the late antique martyrdom includes "powerful erotic elements", such as imitation of Christ's passion or dying loving the Lord with all one's soul", and is represented by rabbi Aqiva, for example. The Maccabean martyrs are, according to Boyarin, characteristically impassionate, expressing in their martyrdom mastery of emotions rather than any emotional attachment to God.<sup>472</sup> Although the contrast is brilliant and Boyarin should without doubt be credited for it, the Rabbinic reception of the Maccabean martyrdoms, if considered to be a part of the Rabbinic discourse, show that the contrast is not that strong: the Rabbinic reception does not fix the Maccabean martyrdoms into the passionate paradigm, as defined by Boyarin. Instead, in their reception, one sees again the flexibility and versatility of the ideas of Jewish martyrdom.

I believe that the arch-typicality of the Maccabean martyrs arises from their usability in broader themes of suffering and death, namely, they address the issues of destruction and lamentation. This, not martyrdom, is the setting in which all the Rabbinic versions of the mother and her seven sons are found. As a conclusion, the Rabbinic versions of the Maccabean martyrdom echo Rabbinic ideas of martyrdom, such as the stress on the Torah and dedication to one God. However, investigating the Rabbinic reception of the Maccabean martyrs, one is introduced to the very environment of survival and preservation of a distinct identity amidst of manifest destruction which provokes and nourishes Jewish martyrdom more broadly.<sup>473</sup>

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<sup>471</sup> Hasan-Rokem 2000, 122.

<sup>472</sup> Boyarin 1999, 95-6. According to Rajak 2001 (1997), 112, "it is the Stoic virtue of mastery of the passions by the agency of reason" which enables martyrdom in 4 Macc.

<sup>473</sup> Hasan-Rokem 2000, 110-1. According to Rajak, the functions Jewish martyrdom in the Greco-Roman period are not to be distinguished from these themes: a Jewish martyr is a national hero, designed to tackle the issues of the community, in comparison to Christian martyrs who function as propagators and advertisers of their faith; Rajak 2001 (1997), 130.

#### 4.1.5. Conclusions

The Maccabean martyrs are considered archetypal martyrs both from a Christian and Jewish point of view. In this chapter, I have explored the use of these martyr figures within early Christian and Rabbinic sources in relation to the developing ideas of martyrdom. In Christianity, these ideas are represented in discourses of martyrdom, in early Christian martyr accounts, and already in the New Testament. In Rabbinic Judaism, they are reflected in the notion of *kiddush ha-Shem*, on one hand, and in martyr narratives provoked by the Roman persecutions, on the other. The purpose of the chapter was to provide the readers with an insight into the ways the Maccabean martyrs are used in this regard and to find out if the characters fit into the martyr paradigm favored by the religious tradition and have a share in its development.

My first conclusion, perhaps obvious, is that I have not found a single Christian reception of the Maccabean martyrs that views them in a negative light. The presence of the Maccabean martyrs is felt there from the very beginning in the Christian reception of 2 Maccabees; the ideals of martyrdom, present in 2 Maccabees, are explicated for example in Hebrews 11: a martyr exemplifies endurance in torture and suffering, provides consolation and encouragement, and manifests the faith. The influence of 4 Maccabees on early Christian martyr accounts shows already toward the end of the second century.

Explicit attention and positive evaluation of the Maccabean martyrs is found in Christian sources increasingly from the third century onwards. In Cyprian and Origen's writings, the Maccabean martyrs are highlighted as paradigmatic role models for Christian martyrs. Cyprian seems to appreciate them for their antiquity and the continuity they provide to the biblical "former pious". Similarly, Origen counts on their authoritative example at least partly because it is found in the Scriptures. Furthermore, Origen shows to be fond of the philosophical-theological manner in which their martyrdom is explicated in 4 Maccabees. By the beginning of the fourth century the latest, we have several appearances of a paradigmatic mother figure of martyrs, who functions in ways similar to the Maccabean mother: she encourages, strengthens, and see off the martyrs to death; she carries their suffering in her body and is mystically martyred with them. However, I have claimed that Eusebius, whose composition confirms the influence of this paradigmatic mother figure, seems not to have knowingly connected the features with the Maccabean martyrs, although at this point a more in-depth study is

recommended.<sup>474</sup> The Christian reception in the setting of persecution and martyrdom highlights the Maccabean martyrs. However, sometimes also the military heroes of the Maccabean Revolt are counted as persecuted. At least in Aphrahat, as well as in Origen and Cyprian, the Maccabean martyrs function as paradigmatic role models among and in line with other biblical examples. As an answer to the question, what made the Maccabean martyrs function as paradigmatic examples, I have suggested that their suitability has mainly to do with the fact that they embodied admirable qualities of martyrs and, most importantly, that they were considered biblical.

Now, thematically the Maccabean martyrs may be related to *kiddush ha-Shem*, a Rabbinic notion which touches on the issue of martyrdom. However, as the term, *kiddush ha-Shem*, is frequently used in the Jewish sources only from the third century onwards, its application to the Maccabean martyrdoms as they are found in the Books of Maccabees, is problematic. In addition, I have observed that the Maccabean martyrs' relation to *kiddush ha-Shem* seems to have "intensified, if not appeared, by time". Once the Jewish ideas of martyrdom become established,<sup>475</sup> it seems to have been easy to discover them also in the Maccabean martyrdoms. Therefore, I have cautiously rejected the possibility of direct relatedness between *kiddush ha-Shem* and the Maccabean martyrs and moved on to compare their martyrdom with a few other classic Rabbinic martyr narratives.

Boyarin has contrasted "late antique martyrdom as a practice of both Rabbinic Jews and Christians", which includes "powerful erotic elements", such as imitation of Christ's passion or dying loving the Lord with all one's soul", and which also rabbi Aqiva is representative of, with the Maccabean martyrdoms, as they are, according to Boyarin, characteristically impassionate, expressing in their martyrdom mastery of emotions rather than any emotional attachment to God.<sup>476</sup> Although the contrast is brilliant and Boyarin should without doubt be credited for it, the Rabbinic reception of the Maccabean martyrdoms, if considered to be a part of the Rabbinic discourse, show that the contrast is not that strong: the Rabbinic

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<sup>474</sup> I have noted that theoretically, Eusebius could have recognized the paradigm, since other contemporary cases show that 'the Maccabees' already appears in Christian martyr literature as a valuable title or attribute as itself. An interesting point of comparison may be provided e.g. by Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*: In 8.8-9, he discusses Josephus and the allegorical meanings of the sacred laws, making an explicit reference to 2 Macc. However, I have excluded it from my analysis because there are no references to martyrdom in it.

<sup>475</sup> That may very well not be before the Middle Ages; Rajak 2001 (1997), 102-3.

<sup>476</sup> Boyarin 1999, 95-6. According to Rajak 2001 (1997), 112, "it is the Stoic virtue of mastery of the passions by the agency of reason" which enables martyrdom in 4 Macc.

reception does not fix the Maccabean martyrdoms into the passionate paradigm, as defined by Boyarin. Instead, in their reception, one sees again the flexibility and versatility of Jewish martyrdom.

However, if the Rabbinic versions of the Maccabean martyrs are compared with the Books of Maccabees, the former can be concluded to have modified with elements characteristic of Rabbinic martyr narratives: they are placed in the setting of Roman persecutions and the role of the Torah obedience is emphasized. However, especially the comparison between the Rabbinic versions of the Maccabean martyrs and rabbi Aqiva shows that their martyrdom is hardly as paradigmatic as his. The Rabbis connect the Maccabean martyrs with questions of suffering and death but they appear paradigmatic not so much as martyrs (witnesses to faith, cf. rabbi Aqiva and the *Shema*) but they, and especially the mother, function better in other performative contexts. The ethos of the mother echoes the destruction of the Jewish national identity during the first centuries of Common Era and perhaps the reconstruction of it around the exilic themes, as the mother is paradigmatically “made barren”. Perhaps the questions of destruction are more present in the Rabbinic notion of martyrdom exactly because their martyrdom, in comparison to Christian, never results in a worldly victory. Thus, the investigation of the Rabbinic reception of the Maccabean martyrs reveals that it is the environment of survival and preservation of a distinct identity amidst of manifest destruction which provokes and nourishes Jewish martyrdom more broadly.<sup>477</sup>

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#### **4.2. The Maccabean Martyrs in a Homiletic Context**

In this chapter, the readers are introduced to the sources which indicate a homiletic context of reception of the Maccabean martyrs. The Christian cult of the Maccabean martyrs, as it has already been discussed in this study, probably began in Antioch in the late-fourth century, where it was connected to a certain tomb and relics.<sup>478</sup> It has been suggested that the Christian cult in Antioch had Jewish origins.<sup>479</sup> For now, this debate has been settled with a consensual view, according to which the Jewish origins of the cult cannot be proven, because of the lack of any Jewish evidence for it.<sup>480</sup> However, the question of a relation of the

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<sup>477</sup> For more about the notion of lament and its functions in Rabbinic Judaism and martyr narratives, see Hasan-Rokem 2000, 110-4.

<sup>478</sup> Rouwhorst 2004, 184-5. See also Ch. 3.4.2.

<sup>479</sup> e.g. Schatkin 1974.

<sup>480</sup> For a summary of the present view, see e.g. Rouwhorst 2004, 186-8.

Maccabean martyrs with a Jewish festival has every now and then been posed, not least because they are contemporarily commemorated in connection with Hanukkah.<sup>481</sup> In my study, the primary focus is thus not on the cult itself (neither Christian, nor Jewish), but on the use of the Maccabean martyrs within a homiletic context. The topic reveals its complexity from the point of view of the reception. Therefore, I consider it worthwhile to gather sources which reflect such use to see how and why the Maccabean martyrs were made into subjects of sermons and finally celebrated among both Christians and Jews.

For the Christian part, such sources are the earliest Christian sermons about the Maccabean martyrs on their commemoration day, by Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom and Augustine,<sup>482</sup> and comparative texts from Cyprian, Ephraem and Ambrose. For the Jewish part, I analyse the elements in 2 and 4 Maccabees which indicate a relation to a cult first. Thereafter, the version of the Maccabean martyrdoms in *Pesikta Rabbati* is taken up, because it is often considered a homily related to a specific Sabbath. Lastly, the question of the Jewish cult is approached through the lens of the Christian sermons.

#### 4.2.1. The Christian Veneration of Jewish Martyrs

According to a general background given by Rouwhorst to the three homilists, all Gregory of Nazianzus, John Chrysostom and Augustine gave their sermons recently after the Christian cult of the Maccabean martyrs had been established; the sermons deal primarily with the Maccabean martyrs and seem to have been held on their annual memorial day, August 1.<sup>483</sup> All the three put a lot of effort into trying to portray these martyrs as Christian role models.<sup>484</sup> Giving a sermon in praise of Jewish martyrs, the homilists seem to have had to tackle the question of their identity – it being Jewish, more precisely.<sup>485</sup> It is that identity which is at stake in this analysis.

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<sup>481</sup> On the development of Hanukkah, Schweid concludes that “[i]n the Sages’ view, neither the military victory nor the renewal of monarchy represented a departure from the state in which God absents Himself. [...] It comes as no surprise that in the words of the Sages it is the passive perception of *kiddush ha-Shem* that is sanctified, a notion linked to the story of Hannah and her seven sons”; Schweid 2000, 149.

<sup>482</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus’ Oratio 15; PG 35, 912-933; John Chrysostom’s three sermons; PG 63, 523-530; 50, 617-626; and Augustine’s sermons 300-301; PL 38, 1376-1385. *Demonstration* 21 by Aphrahat could very well have fallen into this category, too, but it is only discussed in the conclusion (Ch. 4.5.).

<sup>483</sup> Rouwhorst 2005, 84.

<sup>484</sup> Rouwhorst 2005, 93. As a distinction from the exhortations by Origen and Cyprian, I consider these sermons to function outside the context of actual/instant persecution.

<sup>485</sup> Rouwhorst has remarked that it is not special that Jewish figures were venerated as saints; as a matter of fact, several biblical and apocryphal figures were treated in the same way in and around



The opening of Gregory of Nazianzus' sermon expresses a concern: can the Maccabean martyrs be venerated by Christians as they antedate Christ? The concern is answered by claiming that the Maccabean martyrs had faith in Christ, even if it is not made explicit.<sup>486</sup> The problematic issue is thus turned into a victorious proof of the true nature of their devotion: "[n]ot one of those who attained perfection before the coming of Christ", claims Gregory, "accomplished his goal without faith in Christ".<sup>487</sup> If one thinks their martyrdom was fundamentally something else than Christian, then the Christian faith would have met its match.

Moving on to identify these heroic characters, Gregory asks: "What kind of culture and education did they have so as to rise to such a peak of valor and renown"?<sup>488</sup> His answer is, first of all, that it was Jewish, as their culture and education derive from their ancestral customs and the Law. Gregory points to 4 Maccabees, if one wishes to find out more about the case.<sup>489</sup> Later on, when he recalls the contents of the speeches of the Maccabean brothers, he seems to have no problem with the fact that the Maccabean martyrs fought for their Jewish religion, as he mentions the distinctively Jewish elements in their devotion: the ancestral homeland, time-honored festivals and rites, prophets and patriarchs, to mention but a few.<sup>490</sup> However, 4 Maccabees dominates throughout the sermon and makes the fashion of the Maccabean martyrs more philosophical and virtuous than actually Jewish.<sup>491</sup> Vinson has thus suggested that Gregory's construction of the identity of the Maccabean martyrs is a master-piece which does not only build on their Jewishness but is also intentionally equalized with antique pagan ideals, to exemplify its ultimate superiority.<sup>492</sup> In support of her view, Vinson has shown

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the fourth century especially in Eastern Christianity. What is special about the veneration of the Maccabean martyrs is the rapidity of growth and spread of the cult. The Maccabean martyrs are the only pre-Christian figures who were, by the sixth century, included in the Roman calendar of saints; Rouwhorst 2004, 183-4.

<sup>486</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus: *Or.* 15.2; PG 35, 913.

<sup>487</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus: *Or.* 15.1; PG 35, 912.

<sup>488</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus: *Or.* 15.2; PG 35, 913.

<sup>489</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus: *Or.* 15.2-3; PG 35, 913, 916.

<sup>490</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus: *Or.* 15.5-7; PG 35, 917, 920-1. Rouwhorst 2005, 94.

<sup>491</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus builds his sermon explicitly on 4 Macc; Rouwhorst 2005, 85.

<sup>492</sup> According to Vinson, the Maccabean martyrs, by paradigmatically representing the Christian faith, correspond and can compete with Jewish but pagan ideals. She believes that this reflects the urge to address Julian, who wished to favor Judaism and paganism at the expense of Christianity; Vinson 1994, 166, 170. Rouwhorst has pointed out, the sermon itself does not necessarily reflect an instant occasion of persecution but may rather reflect on the issue retrospectively, as "holding a sermon about the Maccabean brothers several years after the reign of Julian, the person of the tyrant Antiochus and the persecution launched by him continued to evoke associations with Julian and his attack on Christianity"; Rouwhorst 2005, 86.

literary parallels between Gregory's homily and Homer's *Iliad*.<sup>493</sup> Indeed, the exploitation of 4 Maccabees suits such a purpose, as in it the philosophical ideals correlate with the religious in a setting of martyrdom which easily connects with Christianity.

John Chrysostom has given three sermons on the Maccabean martyrs. Two of them, which are given on the annual memorial day probably at Antioch in the context of an existing cult,<sup>494</sup> focus on the spiritual and philosophical example of the martyrs, as they "bear identifying marks because of Christ".<sup>495</sup> Like Gregory, John seems to have built his sermon on 4 Maccabees.<sup>496</sup> His third sermon, *de Eleazaro et de septem pueris*, differs from the other two remarkably, as it is designed to defend the cult of the Maccabean martyrs.<sup>497</sup> This sermon is not delivered on the memorial days but a day earlier and its explicit aim is in

"correcting the weaker among our brothers and sisters. [...] Come then, let us correct their way of thinking. For it would be truly shameful for them to celebrate a festival in ignorance of the festival's basis."<sup>498</sup>

As John Chrysostom argues for proper Christian veneration of the Maccabean martyrs, one can recognize similar concerns which are found Gregory's sermon, for example, that they can be counted among the Christian martyrs but, as a matter of fact, are "even more brilliant", because they did not have the explicit model of Christ to follow.<sup>499</sup> As opposed to Gregory, John seems to be greatly concerned with the Jewish legacy of the martyrs; it seems that the erred way of thinking, in urgent need of correction, had something to do with the Jewishness of the martyrs. It is actually this "Jewish question" which dominates the whole sermon.

"But if the Jew cannot endure these words, come, let's capture him with his own weapons, engaging him in debate with nothing from Paul or Peter or John, but from the prophets, so that he might learn that while the facts are on his side, the meaning is on ours."<sup>500</sup>

"I ask the Jew, I ask the sick brother or sister: who gave the new covenant? Without a doubt, everyone will say: Christ."<sup>501</sup>

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<sup>493</sup> Vinson 1994, 167-8. One of the most interesting connective motifs is that the Maccabean mother, like Hector's mother Hecuba, bares her breasts; in *Iliad* it is to persuade her son not to enter the battle field, while in Gregory's sermon she expresses her strength by it, as she shows how she will overcome her maternal instincts and exhort her sons to the battle.

<sup>494</sup> John Chrysostom refers to the relics as if they were there in front of him for everyone to see; John Chrysostom: *Macc.* 1.1; PG 50, 617.

<sup>495</sup> John Chrysostom: *Macc.* 1.1; PG 50, 618.

<sup>496</sup> Rouwhorst 2005, 88. The epic narrative and traces of 4 Macc are strongly present in Gregory's homily and in John's two homilies on the Maccabees. Augustine, in contrast, seems to have built on 2 Macc.

<sup>497</sup> It is very likely given outside Antioch, perhaps in Constantinople; Vinson 1994, 188.

<sup>498</sup> John Chrysostom: *Eleazaro* 1; PG 63, 525.

<sup>499</sup> John Chrysostom: *Eleazaro* 2; PG 63, 525-526.

<sup>500</sup> John Chrysostom: *Eleazaro* 2; PG 63, 526.

<sup>501</sup> John Chrysostom: *Eleazaro* 3; PG 63, 527.

“[T]he Spirit’s grace engraved in the apostles’ minds” (Acts 2:1-4), and “from this source they both bridled Jews and stitched shut philosophers’ mouths and barricaded orators’ tongues”<sup>502</sup>

“[W]hereas countless teachers and prophets took the Jews and molded them day after day, yet didn’t train them as they ought, in a short time they (sc. the apostles) caught up the entire world with considerable ease.”<sup>503</sup>

The examples show that John utilizes a paradigmatic anonymous Jew in his argumentation to sharpen his points. The sick brother or sister, to whom the sermon was first addressed to correct his/her understanding, is turned into “the Jew”.

As a matter of fact, a very similar Jew is found also in Augustine’s sermon 300 on the Maccabean martyrs. He comes to challenge the Christian celebration of the memory of the Maccabees and Augustine treats him harshly: “you are one of those who did not believe in Christ”, “being one of those faithless people”, “the unbelieving Jews, your ancestors, but in evil you brothers” and accuses the Jew for reading the Old Testament falsely, having a veil on his heart.<sup>504</sup> Augustine slides into a comparison between Christ and his contemporary Jews who failed to recognize Christ as they did not know their own Scripture.<sup>505</sup> Finally, he gently ushers the Jew – “Listen to Christ himself, my dear Jew, listen; and may your heart at last be opened”<sup>506</sup> – but it is very difficult to consider this concern genuine after having heard him treat the same Jew in such a vulgar manner.

So far I have proposed that Gregory of Nazianzus’ sermon has been considered the first to witness for an existing cult and that the use of a paradigmatic other (a Jew) connected to the Maccabean martyrs’ identity emerges in the cultic setting.<sup>507</sup> However, there is a text in which both “the Jew”, a need to argue against him, and a reception of the Maccabean martyrs are included, that is, Aphrahat’s Demonstration 21. In addition, there is a liturgic hymn by Ephraem the Syrian in the praise of the Maccabean martyrs and their mother.<sup>508</sup> Being a hymn, it may count as a piece of evidence of the Maccabean martyrs in a cultic setting. Knowing the Ephraem died in 373 CE, his hymn should precede

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<sup>502</sup> John Chrysostom: *Eleazaro* 4; PG 63, 528.

<sup>503</sup> John Chrysostom: *Eleazaro* 5; PG 63, 530.

<sup>504</sup> Augustine: Sermon 300.3; PL 38, 1377.

<sup>505</sup> Augustine: Sermon 300.4; PL 38, 1378.

<sup>506</sup> Augustine: Sermon 300.5; PL 38, 1379.

<sup>507</sup> This is basically in line with Rouwhorst 2005 and 2004 and Vinson 1994.

<sup>508</sup> Witakowski 1994, 157-8. The hymn, “auf die Söhne der Schamoni” as translated in German, is no. 13 in Beck’s edition.

Gregory's sermon at least slightly. It may also indicate that a cult, independent of that in Antioch, was established in Syriac Christianity.<sup>509</sup>

As a hymn is characteristically very different from a sermon or homily, it is rather difficult to make a comparison. At this point, the following comparative conclusions can be drawn about its contents. The mother is the subject of events, not only with regard to the content but also literarily: she is, she acts and she experiences the events the most.<sup>510</sup> Toward the end of the hymn, the focus is shifted onto the youngest brother.<sup>511</sup> The bribing scene, in which the tyrant tries to persuade him, is accounted for in exact. In it, a contrast is created between good and bad, which evolves into a theological reflection on free will and compulsion.<sup>512</sup> Furthermore, there are scriptural connections which are not found in other sermons.<sup>513</sup> In the conclusion, Ephraem refers to the young Joseph, to the prophecies in Daniel, and, finally, to preservation of virginity amidst persecution. Although Ephraem's hymn shows points of connection with Christian reception of the Maccabean martyrs, even a brief acquaintance shows that it is relatively unique in content. Thus, the contents may confirm the possibility that his hymns was not known to Gregory of Nazianzus and but perhaps arises from a different reception tradition.

What do the sermons of John Chrysostom and Augustine imply? At least, in comparison to Gregory the two are much more provoked by the Jewishness of the Maccabean martyrs as they oppose "the Jew" in an explicit and rather aggressive manner. Perhaps the emergence of the Christian cult evoked a debate about their Jewish identity which was concluded with a notion of the Maccabean martyrs dying for nothing less than Christ himself. Whereas yet for Gregory, the martyrs imitated/anticipated Christ's passion, Augustine takes this view into extreme: the

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<sup>509</sup> The earliest literary evidence for the inclusion of the Maccabean martyrs in a Christian calendar of saints is found in the *Martyrologium of Edessa*, a Syriac martyrology dated back to 411 CE; Rouwhorst 2004, 185 n. 10; Schatkin 1874, 99. As the Syriac version is considered to go back into a Greek original (from approx. the 360s), it is difficult to evaluate who would have known it. However, it is in Nisibis and Edessa where Ephraem lived; MacVey 1989, 1.

<sup>510</sup> The hymn begins with a description of "die Mutter der Sieger" and in the six first verses she alone is exalted: "Prächtigt war sie wie ein Vogel" (2); sie gabar sie aus ihrem Schoß und begrub sie im Feuer, und sie hat sie (mit sich) ins Himmelreich gezogen" (3); and "jenen einen (letzten Sohn) ließ sie nicht zurück, damit er Stab ihres Greisenalters ware" (5).

<sup>511</sup> He is called an athlete (17); wise, although physically childish and young (23);

<sup>512</sup> Vv. 18-28. "Der Tyrann drängte mit Zwang den Knaben, zur Lust zu kommen. Und die Jugend, die selbst Zügel nicht von Üppigkeit zurückhalten (können), nahm (hier) nicht an, obwohl man sie dazu drängte. Wir Toren! Wenn unser Herr etwas zu besitzen verbietet, besiegt unser Wille seinen Swang. Jener nahm nicht an, trotz des Zwanges, wir streben danach, trotz des Zwanges" (27-28).

<sup>513</sup> She is compared with the ten maidens with the oil lamps (7-8), cf. Matt 25:1-13; daughter of Jephthah (9-10), cf. Judg 11:29-39; and Anna, who is called a prophet (11-16), cf. Luke 2:36-38.

Maccabean martyrs are Christians. However, a comparison between the Christian sermons and Ephraem's hymn indicates that the hymn was not well-known within the Greek/Latin cult. Perhaps Ephraem's hymn arises from a different reception tradition. This may also indicate that a cult, independent of that in Antioch, was established in Syriac Christianity.<sup>514</sup>

#### 4.2.2. Is There A Link to A Jewish Festival?

There are three contexts within the span of my study, in which a link between the Maccabean martyrs and a Jewish cult could arise. Those are: 2 Maccabees, including the legendary roots of Hanukkah; 4 Maccabees, including peculiar references to its occasion of composition; and the case of fourth-century Antioch, in connection with the emergence of the Christian cult of the Maccabean martyrs.

The earliest connection may be suggested by 2 Maccabees, as it provides us with feasting letters, the legendary story of the miracle of the oil lamp and the purification of the temple, and the martyr accounts in one work.<sup>515</sup> Flusser recently argued that the letter in 2 Macc 1:10-2:18 would be written by Judas Maccabeus himself.<sup>516</sup> He holds that Hanukkah is the only memorial day which has survived "from the time of the Maccabees", and is referred to as "the festival of booths but in the month of Kislev" as early as 124 BCE.<sup>517</sup>

His relies on 2 Maccabees as an authentic source of history and is thereby opposed by the majority of scholars. In addition, he is rather polemic in his claims.<sup>518</sup> However, the argumentation confirms, at minimum, that if 2 Maccabees is connected to a cultic setting, the main character involved would be Judas Maccabeus, not the martyrs. This is supported by the rare Rabbinic references to

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<sup>514</sup> The earliest literary evidence for the inclusion of the Maccabean martyrs in a Christian calendar of saints is found in the *Martyrologium of Edessa*, a Syriac martyrology dated back to 411 CE; Rouwhorst 2004, 185 n. 10; Schatkin 1874, 99. As the Syriac version is considered to go back into a Greek original (from approx. the 360s), it is difficult to evaluate who would have known it. However, it is in Nisibis and Edessa where Ephraem lived; MacVey 1989, 1.

<sup>515</sup> The feasting letters are right in the beginning of the book (2 Macc 1:1-9; 1:10-2:18), the martyrdoms in Ch 6-7, and the purification of the temple in Ch 10.

<sup>516</sup> Flusser 2009, 113. For his argumentation, see Flusser 2009, 114-6. He also considers Antiochus' letter in 2 Macc 9:19-27 to be authentic; Flusser 2009, 115.

<sup>517</sup> Flusser 2009, 128. The reference is in the first feasting letter, in 2 Macc 1:9. Thus, both festivals, the festival of booths and Hanukkah, lasted for eight days.

<sup>518</sup> Flusser 2009, 21. According to him, the true miracle of Hanukkah was that it was Judas, not God, who purified the temple and saved the people, and therefore inaugurated a new, more independent, era in the history of the Jews; Flusser 2009, 60-2. In my opinion, the way Flusser connects Hanukkah, Jewish survival and independence shows that his perspective is much influenced by historical events which are outside the time span of this study. See his references to e.g. the Six Day War in Flusser 2009, 113-4; see also 60-2, 133, 137.

the Hasmoneans, which often credit them for purifying the temple.<sup>519</sup> The fact that 2 Maccabees makes use of the heroic martyr figures may however imply that the epitomist wanted to include the martyrs in the memory of the dedication of the temple.<sup>520</sup> At least later on, the Maccabean martyrs' thematic connection to the celebration of the Hanukkah is established without difficulties.

4 Maccabees has every now and then been considered a homily or memorial speech, due to its reference to "the present occasion"<sup>521</sup> and to a suggested inscription on the tomb of the martyrs.<sup>522</sup> It has been suggested that the special occasion may imply Hanukkah, but 4 Maccabees can hardly be considered a homily as it does not build on a biblical passage.<sup>523</sup> Neither of the references provides evidence for the existence of an actual celebration, as they can be considered mere rhetoric.<sup>524</sup> However, Rajak has claimed that 4 Maccabees is concluded with two homilies.<sup>525</sup> Presuming that 4 Maccabees includes homiletic elements, one may not exclude the possibility that the text hints towards some kind of veneration of the Maccabean martyrs in a cultic setting already among certain first- or second-century Jews.

Moving on to the Rabbinic sources, one finds vague references to the kindling of the Hanukkah candles connected with the motif of persecution in *Ekhah Rabbati* 1.16, among the various feminine martyr narratives, not however in connection to the mother of the seven.<sup>526</sup> In *b Gittin* 57b and *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah* for that matter, there are no elements indicating celebrations of cultic customs. Among the Rabbinic versions, the closest to a homily maybe provided

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<sup>519</sup> Stemberger 1992, 194, 196. The reference is made in sermons for Hanukkah in *PesR* 2.1. and 6.1. and implies Mattathias and his sons, not the Maccabean martyrs.

<sup>520</sup> Ziadé 2007, 64.

<sup>521</sup> "The present occasion now invites us to a narrative demonstration of temperate reason"; 4 Macc 3:19.

<sup>522</sup> "Indeed it would be proper to inscribe on their tomb these words as a reminder to the people of our nation: "Here lie buried an aged priest and an aged woman and seven sons, because of the violence of the tyrant who wished to destroy the way of life of the Hebrews. They vindicated their nation, looking to God and enduring torture even to death."; 4 Macc 17:8-10.

<sup>523</sup> The genre of the book has indeed been discussed. As Rajak sums up, it has been considered disquisition, diatribe, dialogue, or panegyric; Rajak 2001 (1997), 113. van Henten concludes that it has features similar to funeral orations but not conclusively; van Henten 1997, 67. I find it difficult to think that 4 Macc were anything but a literary composition.

<sup>524</sup> For a detailed discussion on the occasion, see van Henten 1997, 60-62; DeSilva 2006, xxi-v; and Hadas 1953, 103-9. See also Ziadé 2007, 52-55.

<sup>525</sup> Rajak 2001 (1997), 113. The conclusion of the book is rather incoherent which may indicate later additions. Even so, the additions may speak in favor of a cultic use.

<sup>526</sup> For example, *ER* 1.16.45 accounts for a case of the emperor's wife who gave birth on the ninth of Ab, "while the Israelites were mourning the destruction of the temple". Soon after, on Hanukkah, her child died. The Israelites wanted to lit the Hanukkah candles and were led into a conflict with the persecutor, as they had mourned when his child was born and celebrated when his child died.

by *Pesikta Rabbati*, which is a collection of discourses on feasts and special Sabbaths, including several references to festivals with the Hasmoneans and the purification of the temple.<sup>527</sup>

The mother and her seven sons are found in a *piska* on Hannah's prayer (1 Sam 2:3-5), which discusses the biblical barren women thematically.<sup>528</sup> The mother of the seven is, rather surprisingly, found among the biblical women who long for progeny, although, unlike the others, she was known as the mother of many, and in contrast to the other women presented, she was "made barren" by God.<sup>529</sup> Due to the connection made in *Pesikta Rabbati* between the mother of seven and the mother of Samuel, she is identified as Hannah in later Rabbinic and Jewish reception.<sup>530</sup> This indicates that the version in *Pesikta Rabbati* plays the most significant role in later reception.<sup>531</sup>

Being convinced of the co-existence of both Jewish and Christian cults of the Maccabean martyrs in the fourth-century Antioch, Vinson has suggested that the local Jews commemorated these eight martyrs during their eight-day long festival of Hanukkah by lighting candles.<sup>532</sup> Ziadé has speculated, based on Gregory of Nazianzus' homily, that the Jewish cultic setting, if existing, would be either Tisha b'Av, a commemoration of the destructions of the temple in July-August, or Hanukkah, in December.<sup>533</sup> Vinson has further suggested that also the Christians would first have celebrated the martyrs during Hanukkah but because of the confusion caused by a concurrent Jewish celebration, the Christian feast was changed to August 1.<sup>534</sup>

Engaging in the discussion of Hanukkah, a small review of its history, or what can be known of it, is at place. Its legendary roots go back to the Maccabean

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<sup>527</sup> *Pesikta* is a Rabbinic discourse on a biblical lesson, *piska*, of a festival occasion or a special Sabbath; Braude 1968, 1-2. According to Stemberger, a sermon for Hanukkah mentions sons of Hashmonay (*PesR* 2.1) and the Hasmonean family, who defeated the people of Greece, is also connected with remembrance of the dedication (*PesR* 6.1.); Stemberger 1992, 196. However, both references are made Mattathias and his sons in mind.

<sup>528</sup> The occasion concerned is not Hanukkah but New Year's Day; Braude 1968, 15.

<sup>529</sup> *PesR* 43.4.

<sup>530</sup> E.g. the whole article about the Maccabean martyrs in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* is called "Hannah and her seven sons"; Cohen 2007, 325. See also Hasan-Rokem 2000, 229, n. 22.

<sup>531</sup> The mother is called Miriam in both *b Git* 57b and *ER* 1.16.50.

<sup>532</sup> Vinson 1994, 185-8.

<sup>533</sup> Ziadé 2007, 63-5. For a list of the Jewish moths and their equivalents, see Appendix 11 in Goldstein 1984, 549.

<sup>534</sup> Vinson 1994, 188. In note 66, she touches upon the issue of the emergence of Christmas at Antioch towards the end of the fourth century CE; if the Christian celebration of the Maccabean martyrs would have been shifted from December, and from too close relation to the Hanukkah, to August, then Christmas might have come to replace it. Coincidentally, Rouwhorst also compares the rapid speed of the spread of the Maccabean cult with nothing less than Christmas and Epiphany; Rouwhorst 2004, 185.

Revolt and the purification of the temple by Judas Maccabeus recounted in 1 and 2 Maccabees.<sup>535</sup> As time goes by, the Maccabean martyrs gain a prominent position in Jewish cult, too, that is, in connection to the festival of Hanukkah, as it is taken as a celebration of Jewish “individual heroism against an oppressive ruler”.<sup>536</sup> Despite the speculations, possible linkages between the Maccabean martyrs and a Jewish celebration appear to be rather confusing, fragmentary, and highly hypothetical in nature. Rutgers has pointed out that it is the ignorance regarding the early history of the celebration Hanukkah which presents a problem: John Chrysostom, showing familiarity to several annual celebrations of the Jews, makes no mention of Hanukkah and, as a matter of fact, there is “hardly any evidence available on this festival until fairly late in antique Jewish history”.<sup>537</sup>

In sum, in the light of all the materials discussed, the dating of the emergence of the Maccabean martyrs within a Jewish cultic setting becomes all the more complex.<sup>538</sup> Schweid has pointed out that contents and form of Jewish religious festivals have, until very recently, suffered from a certain discontinuity brought with the adaptation of “contemporary holidays to the pattern of traditional holidays”, for example, as Hanukkah is combined with the Independence Day and Tisha B’Av with the Holocaust Day.<sup>539</sup> Thus, at this point, I cannot but reject the possibility that the reception of the Maccabean martyrs would provide an access to an existing celebration of Hanukkah before the fourth century.

However, having discussed 2 and 4 Maccabees and the Rabbinic homiletic context, I will turn back to the Christian sources to point out a few more observations relevant to the topic. Gregory of Nazianzus’s sermon implies that the Christians were hesitant at celebrating the Maccabean martyrs,<sup>540</sup> and yet he connects the celebration with annual festal processions and other visible expressions.<sup>541</sup> Vinson has suggested that these were not Christian processions, but Jewish, and that the Christians during Gregory’s time were perhaps joining the celebrations for various reasons.<sup>542</sup> Similarly, John Chrysostom, as we have

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<sup>535</sup> 1 Macc 4:52-59; 2 Macc 10. See also Schweid 2000, 144-8.

<sup>536</sup> Hasan-Rokem 2000, 199.

<sup>537</sup> Rutgers 1998, 297.

<sup>538</sup> The commemoration of Hanukkah seems to provide confusingly many links to the topic of my study: in addition to the celebration of the purification of the temple during the Maccabean Revolt, it is a celebration of a strategy of Jewish survival and perseverance in the exile, that is, *kiddush ha-Shem*; see Schweid 2000, 145-9.

<sup>539</sup> Schweid 2000, 220.

<sup>540</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus: *Or.* 15.1; PG 35, 912.

<sup>541</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus: *Or.* 15.2; PG 35, 913.

<sup>542</sup> Vinson 1994, 176.



already learned, is most motivated in correcting the Christian manner of celebration, implying no need to exhort them to celebrate but rather to specify their reasons for it.

I say this since many of the more naïve, due to a mental incapacity, are being swept along by the Church's enemies [and] do not hold the appropriate opinion of these saints, nor, in the same way, do they number them in the rest of the chorus of the martyrs, saying that they didn't shed their blood for Christ but for the law and the edicts that were in the law, in that they were killed over pig's flesh.<sup>543</sup>

John encourages his listeners that they may indeed learn more about the true contents of the celebration if they will not engage in "ill-timed gatherings and mindless frivolity in these intervening days".<sup>544</sup> These two references may indicate that there existed incorrect ways to celebrate the martyrs. As I have noted earlier, those who, in John's opinion, had misunderstood the point of the festival are later linked with Jews. However, both that and the reference to the Church's enemies may imply the Jews but also another group of Christians with a differing opinion.<sup>545</sup>

In addition, even Augustine, preaching far from Antioch, remarks that his listeners "should not think they (the Maccabean martyrs) were not Christians".<sup>546</sup>

"That's why it is not unsuitable, not in the least improper, but on the contrary absolutely right for their day and their solemnity to be celebrated especially by Christians. What do the Jews know about such a celebration? Word is going round that there is a basilica of the Holy Maccabees in Antioch; in the very city, that is to say, which is called by the name of that persecuting kind. [...] This basilica is owned by Christians, was built by Christians. It is we who keep, we who celebrate their memory; it is among us that thousands of holy martyrs throughout the world have imitated their sufferings."<sup>547</sup>

Indeed, one finds in these sermons a persistent need to argue for the Christian character of the cult. It is alluring to think that the polemic arises from an awareness of the Maccabean martyrs' commemoration among contemporary Jews. However, the references in Gregory and John are very imprecise and the people may have had several reasons to celebrate the martyrs enthusiastically but ignorantly. Furthermore, Augustine seems in the end to be provoked by the idea that martyrdom was not a Christian marker and may therefore have wanted to emphasize the Christian character of the cult. As Jacobs has noted, "it is rare to

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<sup>543</sup> John Chrysostom: *Eleazaro* 1; PG 63, 525.

<sup>544</sup> John Chrysostom: *Eleazaro* 3; PG 63, 527-8.

<sup>545</sup> As a matter of fact, one often finds in connection to John Chrysostom a mention of his debate against "Judaizing Christians" who would have nothing or not much to do with actual Jews; for further references, see Rouwhorst 2004, 189. See also Wilken, R. L., *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and reality in the late 4th century* (Berkeley: University of California Press 1983) and a collection of John Chrysostom's texts, *Discourses Against Judaizing Christians* (FC 68. Transl. by P. W. Harkins 1979).

<sup>546</sup> Augustine: *Serm.* 300.2; PL 38, 1377.

<sup>547</sup> Augustine: *Serm.* 300.6; PL 38, 1379.

find an early Christian text that does *not* speak about Jews and Judaism, and usually in a highly charged (although multifaceted) way”.<sup>548</sup> An existing Jewish cult cannot be argued for in this way either.

Finally, I want to point out that not only *Pesikta Rabbati* 43 but also Gregory of Nazianzus make a reference to Samuel’s mother Hannah, comparing the Maccabean mother with her.<sup>549</sup> Of course, later on Hannah’s prayer is also used in connection to Hanukkah, as she was considered the one who prophesized about the Maccabean Revolt and conflict with the Greeks.<sup>550</sup> As such a connection is not found in the Books of Maccabees, the reference to Hannah may suggest a connection between the Christian, Rabbinic and later Jewish Hanukkah traditions. Now, Gregory may have received it from *Pesikta Rabbati*; but, it could also the other way around. As noted, Stemberger’s speculations about the Jewish-Christian relations in Late Antiquity suggest a “reflux of traditions of Jewish origin” caused, for example, by the “contacts with the growing Christianity”.<sup>551</sup>

#### 4.2.3. Conclusions

The Christian cult of the Maccabean cult was rapid in growth and received with extraordinarily wide-ranging popularity, in comparison to other non-Christian saints.<sup>552</sup> It seems that their Jewishness is less of an irrelevant issue in the homiletic setting connected to the cult. Generally, all the preachers deal with the justification of the veneration of the martyrs, especially that the Maccabean martyrs preceded Christ. Gregory of Nazianzus does not make it into a Jewish question but John Chrysostom certainly does (especially outside Antioch) and so does Augustine. After the cult has been established, the need to argue for its existence is no longer reflected in later sermons.<sup>553</sup> However, there seems to be Syriac Christian material about the Maccabean martyrs with homiletic implications. Therefore, the emergence, or the early development, of the Christian cult should not be restricted to the case of Antioch only.

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<sup>548</sup> Jacobs 2008, 172.

<sup>549</sup> “Hannah, too, consecrated a single son, a gift from God, and him an infant, while I have devoted to God seven grown men, and these acting of their own will”; Gregory of Nazianzus: *Or.* 15.9; PG 35, 923.

<sup>550</sup> Flusser 2009, 143. Again, it is difficult to say when this occurs. *PesR* 43 does not connect her with such a prophecy or martyrdom or Hanukkah and the compilation of *PesR* in its final edited form took place in the sixth or more probably seventh century; Braude 1968, 26.

<sup>551</sup> Stemberger 1992, 203.

<sup>552</sup> Rouwhorst 2004, 183-4.

<sup>553</sup> See e.g. Leo I: *In natali sanctorum septem fratrum martyrum Machabeorum*; SC 200, 286-92, and Valerian: *De Machabaies*; PL 52, 743-9. In those sermons, the Jewish question is less of a burning issue, as neither Leo nor Valerian exploit the paradigmatic Jew;

With regard to the Jewish cult, I have not discussed it as providing possible origins to the Christian cult but accepted the current scholarly view, according to which there is no access to the time prior to the Christian cult.<sup>554</sup> However, I have explored my sources for any links between the Maccabean martyrs and a festival setting. Although all the sources appeared to be pregnant with clues and possible connections, they remain fragmentary and no special conclusions can be made. Samuel's mother Hannah provides a connective motif between Gregory of Nazianzus, *Pesikta Rabbati*, and she is also connected to Hanukkah. At this point, it must be satisfactory simply to acknowledge these tentative yet fragmentary connections.

### **4.3. An Essay in Thematic Comparison**

Finally, I want to conclude the analysis of paradigmatic functions of the Maccabean martyrs with a thematic comparison. Instead of an attempt to make an exhaustive overview, I have chosen two thematic cases of reception, the law and the mother. The law and the mother, playing a significant role already in 2 Maccabees' version of the martyrdoms, demonstrate a changing reception-history, highlighting the specifics of Christian and Rabbinic reception. In addition, I discuss an image which represents the collective of the Maccabean, a seven- or eight-branched candlestick, which only appears after the Books of Maccabees.

#### **4.3.1. The Reception of the Law**

The nature of the Law and proper obedience to it characterize the martyr accounts in 2 Maccabees 6-7. Eleazar's behavior is worthy of the "holy God-given Law" for which he is willing to die,<sup>555</sup> and the brothers are "ready to die rather than transgress the laws".<sup>556</sup> There are two occasions which particularly highlight the case of obedience. First, Eleazar's friends, out of sympathy toward him, exhort him to save himself by a ruse, to only pretend he eats the sacrificed meat. Eleazar adamantly refuses the ruse, invoking his example of nobility.<sup>557</sup> Secondly, there is a bribing scene with the king, the youngest brother, and the mother in it. After executing the first six brothers, the king changes his coercive methods into more gentle ones, bribes the boy and tries to manipulate the mother to persuade her son.

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<sup>554</sup> Rouwhorst 2004, 187-8.

<sup>555</sup> 2 Macc 6:23, 27-28.

<sup>556</sup> 2 Macc 7:2, 30, 37.

<sup>557</sup> 2 Macc 6:21-28.

In the bribing scene, it is the maternal love which is tested, and the mother shows her loyalty to the laws by exhorting her son to martyrdom.<sup>558</sup>

The questions related to the law remain some of the most characteristic issues of the Maccabean martyrs in their reception. The various and distinctive ways to deal with these questions demonstrate the mutual independence and separatedness of Rabbinic and Christian reception.

***Obedience to the Torah is intensified in the Rabbinic reception, while it loses its importance in Christian reception.***

In the Rabbinic versions of the Maccabean martyrdoms, “it is written in the Torah” is paradigmatically repeated.<sup>559</sup> The brothers always confront the persecutor with a Torah quotation as their weapon of defence.<sup>560</sup> Furthermore, the symbol for transgression in 2 and 4 Maccabees – to eat pork – is simplified into a mere command to “serve the idol”, which is always opposed by the Torah.<sup>561</sup> Generally, the Rabbinic versions reflect the stress on monotheism and the fundamental character of the Torah.<sup>562</sup> Similar emphases are not found in the Christian cases of reception which generally seem to focus on the philosophical virtues of the brothers more than on their capacity to obey.<sup>563</sup> This shows how 4 Maccabees dominates the Christian reception but also that the Maccabean martyrs are but one example which shows the adaptation of Hellenistic ideas and philosophy in the making of Christianity.

Related to the authority, functions and fundamentalism of the Torah, several versions of the Maccabean martyrdoms repeat a scene which has to do with cheating, bribing. In 4 Maccabees, it finds its most extensive form: the king tries to win the youngest son over, brings in the mother to persuade her son on his behalf.<sup>564</sup> She talks to him and Antiochus is left under the impression that the son

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<sup>558</sup> 2 Macc 7:24-29.

<sup>559</sup> Without a doubt, one finds a strong stress on the Torah observance also in 2 (and 4) Macc.

<sup>560</sup> An exception is provided by *PesR* where they simply say: “I shall not deny God.”

<sup>561</sup> “Serve the idol” in *b Git* 57b; “Bow down before the idol” in *ER*; “Bow down to this divinity as your brothers have done” in *SER*; and in *PesR*, “Come and bow the down to the idol.”

<sup>562</sup> This, as I have noted earlier, shows comparable features with other Rabbinic martyr narratives; see Ch. 4.1.4. Furthermore, as pointed out in Ch. 3.5., in 5 *Macc* the martyrs were not only compelled to eat pork but also to worship Antiochus’ image; 5 *Macc* 3:14. This may also reflect the influence of the Rabbinic versions.

<sup>563</sup> For example, Gregory of Nazianzus remarks how “even their endurance pales before the shrewdness of their words”; Gregory of Nazianzus: *Or.* 15.5; PG 35, 917. He elevates their wisdom, dignity, and capacity and writes a conclusion of their speeches; Gregory of Nazianzus: *Or.* 15.5-7; PG 35, 917, 920-1.

<sup>564</sup> 4 Macc 12:1-7. In 4 Macc, the mother is actively involved, whereas in 2 Macc, she somewhat unwillingly, after a long persuasion by the king, gives in and goes to give counsel to her son.

would co-operate.<sup>565</sup> Then, surprisingly, he gives an aggressive speech contrary to all expectations and runs to his death.<sup>566</sup> The scene in 4 Maccabees underlines Antiochus' humanity: according to it, Antiochus felt genuine compassion toward Eleazar and the youngest brother; yet, the story shows his failure at manipulating the woman and, through her, her son. In comparison to 2 Maccabees, the deceitfulness of the mother toward Antiochus is also highlighted, as Antiochus really seems to believe that she is willing to co-operate with him.

Christian receptions of the bribing theme emphasize the mother acting against customary expectations:

"For the dew of piety and breath of holiness did not allow the fire of mother's feelings, which inflames many mothers in the presence of most grievous ills, to be kindled within her heart."<sup>567</sup>

The persecutor Antiochus thought of this woman as a mother like other mother. [...] They were all expecting words like following [...] She on the contrary said, 'Give your consent to God, don't abandon your brothers. If you seem to abandon me, that's when you don't abandon me'.<sup>568</sup>

The rabbinic versions are only about the mother and her seven sons with no mention of Eleazar. However, the ruse is found in *b Gittin* 57b and *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah* in connection with the last son, who first gets the offer of a ruse.<sup>569</sup> This may imply that Eleazar's memory echoes distantly also in the rabbinic versions. However, the most surprising elaboration of the theme of Torah obedience is found in *Ekhah Rabbati* 1.16.50. In the bribing scene with the emperor, the mother and her last son, the obedience to the Torah tested in a surprising way.<sup>570</sup> The mother asks the emperor for a chance to hold her last son after she has heard that he too is condemned to be killed. In her despair, she asks to be killed before the boy, to which the emperor has an answer ready: "I cannot agree to that because it is written in your Torah, *And whether it be cow or ewe, ye shall not kill it and its young both in one day*". Disappointed and furious, she judges him as a hypocrite, for being thoughtful of the Jewish food regulations.<sup>571</sup>

According to Hasan-Rokem, the Rabbinic story is designed to challenge fundamentalist use of the Scripture: while the emperor escapes the responsibility for his actions by religious grounds (which are not even his own!), the mother

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<sup>565</sup> 4 Macc 12:8-9.

<sup>566</sup> 4 Macc 12:11-19; cf. 2 Macc 7:24-29. In 2 Macc, the son does not commit a suicide.

<sup>567</sup> Origen: *Mart.* 27; Origenes Werke 1 (ed. Koetschau), 23.

<sup>568</sup> Augustine: *Serm.* 300.7; PL 38, 1379.

<sup>569</sup> "The Emperor said: I will throw down my seal before you and you can stoop down and pick it up, so that they will say of you that you have conformed to the desire"; *b Git* 57b, see also *SER* 30.

<sup>570</sup> The same story is found also in *SER* 30.

<sup>571</sup> She retorts: "You unutterable fool! Have you already fulfilled all the commandments save only this one!" In *SER* 30, it is instead the boy who replies: "You are the biggest fool in the world!"

shows her strength in expressing her feelings courageously and manifests that “fundamentalist” obedience to the Torah are not enough.<sup>572</sup> If, indeed, this is the conclusive message, the story in *Ekhah Rabbati* relativizes the issue of obedience greatly and provides harsh criticism of fundamentalistic interpretation of the Torah, which is exactly what the martyrs in 4 and also 2 Maccabees embody. Moreover, implying the triviality of the food regulations, it may question also the persistence of not eating pork.

A polemic of very different sort is found in Christian sermons about the Maccabean martyrs: “The (Christian) martyrs confessed plainly the same one as the Maccabees at that earlier time confessed in a hidden manner”, that is, “Christ veiled in law”.<sup>573</sup> It is Augustine who perhaps most devotedly debates the topic: he insists on having a “Christian understanding on the matter”, which means one should approach the Old Testament with the “key of the cross” to unveil the heart of the reader, because while the Maccabees died for the name of Christ veiled in the law, by Christ’s death, conveniently, “everything that was veiled in the Old Testament to be unveiled and revealed in the mystery of the cross”.<sup>574</sup>

The comparative survey shows that the questions related to the law are elaborated in various ways which do not necessarily have much to do with each other. It is, however, interesting that the mother’s role seems to increase in significance but also in active participation in both Rabbinic and Christian cases.

#### **4.3.2. The Reception of the Mother**

The reception of the mother shows remarkable differences and similarities between and within the Rabbinic and Christian receptions. In several cases she is depicted as joyful, although it is not always easy to understand exactly what this implies. Furthermore, and as often, she is placed in a comparison with Abraham, the archepatriarch. The elaborations of these themes suggest that not only 2 but also 4 Maccabees influenced both Rabbinic and Christian reception. They also hint toward a possibility of mutual – even if indirect – exchange of ideas.

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<sup>572</sup> “The story itself thus demonstrates the usually accurate claim that quoting verses can serve many and opposing causes, and sometimes even unjust ones”; Hasan-Rokem 2000, 118.

<sup>573</sup> Augustine: *Serm.* 300.5; PL 38, 1379. In Valerian’s *Hom.* 18, the ancestral laws are turned into “heavenly laws”, which imply a better understanding of the matter; Valerian: *Hom.* 18.5; PL 52, 749.

<sup>574</sup> Augustine: *Serm.* 301.3; PL 38, 1381, and *Serm.* 300.3-5; PL 38, 1378.

### *The joyful mother appears in both Rabbinic and Christian reception*

In 2 and 4 Maccabees, the mother is not yet considered joyful. In 2 Maccabees, the emotionality of the mother is not remarked on. She was admirable and courageous and accepted her sons' fate without complaint but the story is not concerned with her emotions.<sup>575</sup> In 4 Maccabees, which is generally focused on emotions and a person's abilities to control them, the author plays with the option that the mother had been "fainthearted", acted like an average mother, and complained about her unhappy destiny. There is however no indicator that she would have been the opposite, that is, joyful.<sup>576</sup> Generally, she is praised for her lack of emotion; for not raising a lament and not grieving as her sons are dying.<sup>577</sup>

Curiously, all the Rabbinic versions share the same scriptural conclusion: the mother is commemorated with a Psalm verse as "a joyful mother of children".<sup>578</sup> As the Rabbinic versions characterized by themes of destruction and the mother often turns suicidal, the reference joyfulness of the mother seems sudden and out of place. However, it can be considered a firm piece of evidence for the mutual thematic connectedness within the Rabbinic reception as a whole.

Hasan-Rokem has suggested that the whole comment is inserted in *Ekhah Rabbati* to bring about a sense of irony: who, she asks, would take it seriously that the mother, having witnessed the events just reported, is now "joyful to play the heroine in a plot of martyrdom"? She suggests that the sudden unexpected joyfulness of the mother has to do with a role play: as the mother is suddenly reversed into "a joyful mother of children", it is the Holy Spirit who is left with the lamenter's part, to sigh "for these things I weep".<sup>579</sup> Hasan-Rokem is right to conclude that the joyfulness cannot really arise from the instant events. However, as the comment is found in each of the Rabbinic versions, I do not find irony to be sufficient enough answer.

While I cannot offer a final explanation of the origin of the mother's joyfulness, my earlier comparison between the Maccabean martyrs and rabbi Aqiva may provide a hint.<sup>580</sup> When rabbi Aqiva was martyred, a "heavenly voice went forth and said: 'Happy are you, rabbi Aqiva, that your soul departed at (the

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<sup>575</sup> E.g. 2 Macc 7:20-22.

<sup>576</sup> 4 Macc 16:5-11: "If this woman, though a mother, had been fainthearted, she would have mourned over them and perhaps spoken as follows: "O how wretched am I and many times unhappy!"

<sup>577</sup> 4 Macc 16:12-13.

<sup>578</sup> Ps. 113:9: "He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children."

<sup>579</sup> Hasan-Rokem 2000, 119.

<sup>580</sup> See Ch. 4.1.4.

word) *one*.”<sup>581</sup> Although I can point out such a comparable element in the accounts (that both rabbi Aqiva and the mother are called ‘happy’), the paradoxical happiness of the mother cannot be fully explained. Rabbi Aqiva is discovered happy because of his witness. In contrast, the mother is a mother who has just lost her children. Had the readers associated her joyfulness with that of rabbi Aqiva’s, they should have been left with a puzzling contrast: rabbi Aqiva’s happy departure underlines the mere human despair represented by the mother who, losing her everything, resembles strategies of coping with the experience of suffering, death, and destruction.

The version in *Pesikta Rabbati* at least leaves no room for irony: “In the time-to-come I will cause her rejoice the more in her children, a joyful mother of children.”<sup>582</sup> Does this not account for a rather genuine hope for resurrection and consolation in the belief in afterlife? However, among the Rabbinic versions, the reference to afterlife is made only in *Pesikta Rabbati*. It is no wonder that a hope for resurrection and afterlife is fundamental in the Christian reception. Gregory of Nazianzus highlights the special motherhood of the mother. He accounts for the mother’s testimony in the following way:

“I have left nothing for the world”, “I will not raise lament; I will not invite other women to lament with me [...] these things ordinary mothers do, mothers in flesh alone, whose children die without any record of achievement. Dearest children, in my eyes you are not dead”<sup>583</sup>

”Christ will keep you for me there, and Antiochus won’t take you away from me there.”<sup>584</sup>

Clearly, it is the hope for resurrection which is reflected in the mother’s attitude. Meanwhile, she also creates a contrast, showing her particularity among the mothers, as she acts against the common custom of grieving for the dead.

Although the biblical quotation never occurs in the Christian receptions, the joyfulness of the mother, rather surprisingly, does. Already in the third century according to Cyprian, the mother “gazed upon her dying children cheerfully”, “bearing her son by a happier birth”.<sup>585</sup> Moreover, according to John Chrysostom, “she rejoiced on seeing them tortured”.<sup>586</sup> Ambrose, in *de Iacob*, emphasizes, in accordance with 4 Maccabees, the devotion of the mother, as she “restrained from her natural laments” and “did not weep or wail”.<sup>587</sup> Thus, he asks, ”who would

<sup>581</sup> *b Berakhot* 61b. The word *one* refers to *Shema*, the confession of faith (Deut 6:5).

<sup>582</sup> *PesR* 43:4.

<sup>583</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus: *Or.* 15.9; PG 35, 923.

<sup>584</sup> Augustine: *Serm.* 300.7; PL 38, 1379.

<sup>585</sup> Cyprian: *Fort.* 11; CCSL 3:1, 203. See also e.g. Valerian: *Hom.* 18.5; PL 52, 748.

<sup>586</sup> John Chrysostom: *Macc.* 2; PG 63, 628.

<sup>587</sup> Ambrose: *Jac.* 12.54, 56; PL 14, 637.



say that she was not happy?”<sup>588</sup> Now, although Ambrose seems to have written his exaltations in the spirit of 4 Maccabees, he has received the joyfulness of the mother from somewhere else.

In sum, the mother is depicted as joyful –for whichever reasons – in various cases of reception. The point is perhaps further underlined when in 5 Maccabees, “the king turned to his mother, and said to her; “Happy woman, pity this thy son, whom alone thou has surviving”.<sup>589</sup> The reference is rather random and is not explained. As neither feature is found in the Books of Maccabees, one is led to conclude that at this point the Rabbinic and Christian receptions intertwine. *Pesikta Rabbati*, differing from the other Rabbinic versions, comes closest to the Christian reception.

### ***The mother is compared with Abraham***

2 Maccabees mentions the ancestors and Abraham among them, only once.<sup>590</sup> In 4 Maccabees, while the Hasmonean relations are deconstructed, the identity of the Maccabean martyrs is repeatedly derived from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: In 4 Maccabees, the mother is not martyred nor does she suffer like her sons and therefore, her virtue is paralleled with that of Abraham “she was of the same mind as Abraham”.<sup>591</sup>

Abraham is a counterpart for the mother in several Christian receptions.<sup>592</sup> The mother matches Abraham by her attitude and willingness but, furthermore, she seems to outrun him in the greatness of her loss. For example, Gregory of Nazianzus equals her with Abraham:

“What an incredibly magnanimous act, a sacrifice the equal of Abraham’s, unless we dare call it even greater! For Abraham willingly offered one son, though it was his only child and the one of promise, indeed, the one to whom the promise referred and, more important, who formed the root and origin not only of his race but also of sacrifices of this kind”.<sup>593</sup>

Similarly, John Chrysostom instructs his listeners:

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<sup>588</sup> Ambrose: *Jac.* 11.53; PL 14, 636.

<sup>589</sup> The wording in 5 Macc does not connect to the biblical Hebrew found in the Rabbinic versions; אַם הַבָּנִים שְׂמַחָה. In 5 Macc 5:38, she is merely addressed as ‘happy woman’; *felix mulier*; ايتها الامراه لسعيد. One should be hesitant with further conclusions based on this comparison, because not only the Latin but perhaps also the Arabic are translations, while the original text of 5 Macc was perhaps written in Hebrew; Charlesworth 1976, 156.

<sup>590</sup> 2 Macc 1:2.

<sup>591</sup> 4 Macc 14:20. It seems that the martyrs in 4 Maccabees actually model the paradigmatic setting of Abraham’s sacrifice, as the sons identified with Isaac; 4 Macc 16:20, 22. Abraham’s name is mentioned by name thirteen times; the martyrs are the children and the seed of Abraham, Abraham is their father and the first of the patriarchs

<sup>592</sup> Note that she is “a true daughter of Abraham” also in *Martyrdom of Saints Montanus and Lucious* 16.3; Musurillo, 230.

<sup>593</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus: *Or.* 15.4; PG 35, 916.

“Reflect on how we marvel at the patriarch Abraham, because he offered up his own son and bound him hand and foot and put him up on the altar, and then you will see well how great the woman’s courage [was]”.<sup>594</sup> \_\_\_

and Saint Valerian:

“Let it be, perhaps, with some a glorious thing, to be explained with salutary examples, that they have offered one son as a victim to God [...]”<sup>595</sup> \_\_\_

“If, therefore, our father Abraham offered one son in sacrifice and pleased God, how much more has this mother pleased Him!”<sup>596</sup> \_\_\_

I believe that the mother and her martyrdom become increasingly significant toward the end of the persecutions. A martyr who was not actually martyred may provide a longer-lasting paradigm, because she does not need the executors to exemplify her deeds to the same extent with the martyrs whose main task is to confess dying. As a matter of fact, while she outruns Abraham, she also parallels the Church. Already during the persecutions, the mother had a special function:

“With the seven children is clearly joined the mother also, their origin and root, who later bore seven churches, herself the first and only one founded by the Lord’s voice upon a rock. Nor it is without significance that the mother alone is with her children in their suffering.”<sup>597</sup> \_\_\_

“She fashioned them into such [witnesses], and so bore for us an entire Church of martyrs”.<sup>598</sup> \_\_\_

Moreover, a passage in Augustine’s example shows how her function lives on:

“[S]eeing them battling, she was herself battling in them all, herself winning in all of them as they won. One woman, one mother, how she set before our eyes our one mother, holy Church, everywhere urging her children to die for the name of the one by whom she conceived and bore them! In this way the world has been filled with the blood of the martyrs, and from the seed thus broadcast it has yielded the crops of the Church.”<sup>599</sup> \_\_\_

Now, perhaps the most surprising discovery is to find Abraham embedded also in all the Rabbinic versions of the Maccabean martyrdoms.<sup>600</sup> Whereas in *Pesikta Rabbati* one finds only a vague reference to Abraham,<sup>601</sup> all the rest take the confrontation to the extreme: it is far from being a mere reference, when the last son gets to hear what greetings he has to take over from his mother to Abraham:

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<sup>594</sup> John Chrysostom: *Macc.* 1.2; PG 50, 620.

<sup>595</sup> Valerian: *Hom.* 18.1; PL 52, 746.

<sup>596</sup> Valerian: *Hom.* 18.2; PL 52, 746-7.

<sup>597</sup> Cyprian: *Fort.* 11; CCSL 3:1, 205.

<sup>598</sup> Ἐκκλησίαν ὀλόκληρον μαρτύρων ἡμῖν ἀποκουήσασα; John Chrysostom: *Macc.* 1.3; 60, 622.

<sup>599</sup> Augustine: *Serm.* 301.1; PL 38, 1381.

<sup>600</sup> To DeSilva, this shows that 4 Macc has at least indirectly influenced the Rabbinic versions of the mother and her seven sons; DeSilva 2006, xxxi-xxxii. However, as the other similarities between 4 Macc and the Rabbinic receptions are vague, I believe that the involvement of 4 Macc is not necessary: perhaps the association between the mother and Abraham was simply fitting, as Abraham certainly was considered paradigmatic in many ways.

<sup>601</sup> *PesR* 43:4; “O my son, do you wish that in the time-to-come all your brothers be put in the bosom of Abraham while you are in the bosom of Esau?”

“My son, go tell Abraham, our father, “My mother says to you, “Do not take pride, claiming, I built an altar and offered up my son, Isaac.” “Now see, my mother built seven altars and offered up seven sons in one day. And yours was only a test, but I really had to do it.”<sup>602</sup>

If one may use Hasan-Rokem’s felicitous choice of words, it is again the “powerful emotionality” of the mother again in action. Through the mother’s message to Abraham (and through her own suicide, which is to follow) the narration builds a transition from the heroism of martyrdom of the sons to a dismissal of that exact heroic ideal”.<sup>603</sup> By her bitter greetings, “I really had to do it“, she does not only link her destiny to the most archetypal story of religious sacrifice but also provides incontestable critique of the rationality of the whole event.

All the references to Abraham create a tension: a woman challenges the patriarchs, she outweighs Abraham himself. There is, however, a great distinction between the Christian and Rabbinic receptions (apart from *Pesikta Rabbati*). In Christian receptions, following 4 Maccabees, the mother (and her sons) functions as someone who confirms the ideal example set by Abraham (and Isaac). In the Rabbinic versions, this very ideal of sacrifice is questioned by the horrifying event, in which no God interferes. As Abraham plays no role in the martyr narratives in 2 Maccabees, one should again conclude that there has been mutual exchange of ideas to some extent.<sup>604</sup>

The comparison to Abraham highlights also the question of the mother’s gender. Already in 2 Maccabees, she is compared with a man,<sup>605</sup> and in 4 Maccabees, she is not only equal to but superior of men.<sup>606</sup> Gender transformation was brought into early Christianity in the martyr narratives of the first centuries, to serve as a sign of progress in faith.<sup>607</sup> The Maccabean mother, from her very

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<sup>602</sup> ER 1.16.50. Similarly, in *b Git* 57b: “My son, go and say to your father Abraham, Thou didst bind one [son to the] altar, but I have bound seven altars”; and in *SER* 30, “My children, go and say to your father Abraham: Do not be proud because you are able to say, ‘I built an altar and offered up my son upon it’ – Behold! I built seven altars and offered and offered my seven sons upon them.”

<sup>603</sup> Hasan-Rokem 2000, 118. “The figure of the mother in the story implodes the very ideal of heroism and points to its fundamental inhumanity, when the emotional intensity ultimately overrides all other considerations, and the mother commits suicide in the madness that follows her bereavement.”

<sup>604</sup> Such exchange has been argued for extensively by Hasan-Rokem with concern to this exact narrative; Hasan-Rokem 2000, 121, 125.

<sup>605</sup> 2 Macc 7:21.

<sup>606</sup> 4 Macc 16:14.

<sup>607</sup> Marjanen 2009, 248, 249. Typically, gender language of antiquity made the feminine equal with weak and cowardly whereas what was virtuous was naturally considered masculine. Against that background, Marjanen remarks that female martyrs become comparatively masculine in martyr accounts, and that, in many cases, those women cross harshly over ordinary gender roles and expectations: gender-bending; Marjanen 2009, 246-7.

first appearance, manifests this visibility; it indicates that reversing gender roles was a manner of illustrating spiritual strength. Not only does the equation of the mother with men continue in Christian reception but also depictions of her as a masculine character.<sup>608</sup> Indeed, she becomes increasingly manly in Christian reception:

“The heart of a man in a woman’s body!”<sup>609</sup>

“So then, let’s reflect on what it’s likely that the woman suffered – if, that is, one should call her a woman”.<sup>610</sup>

Acting manfully, she continues challenging the natural expectations:

“How wasn’t she driven out of her mind when she saw each of them being killed slowly by certain diverse and terrifying tortures? ... How is it that from the first sight she didn’t leap into the fire to free herself from the rest of the spectacle?”<sup>611</sup>

However, when turning to the Rabbinic versions of the mother the despair is something very real:

“After a few days the woman became demented and fell from a roof and died.”<sup>612</sup>

“Thereupon she dropped to the floor in prayer, then went up to the roof, threw herself off, and died.”<sup>613</sup>

The confrontation between the Christian and Rabbinic images of the mother is so intense that one could not recognize the same model behind them. Also in terms of her external appearance, there are great differences. In the rabbinic versions she is remarkably young and fertile.<sup>614</sup> In 4 Maccabees, she is described as old and she turns all the more grey in Christian reception.<sup>615</sup>

Expressions of her femininity/masculinity are elaborated in contrasting ways. While she is made manly in the Christian reception, it is her “feminized strength” which expresses itself in (some of) the Rabbinic versions. Brent Shaw holds that 4 Maccabees was a moral revolution in its time, in terms of gender-bending but reversed: he claims that the passive value of endurance, demonstrated by the martyrs, should have been regarded as immoral, but 4 Maccabees elevates the simple ability to endure above all manifest forms of power; “sheer *endurance*

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<sup>608</sup> Also the Slavonic version of Josephus’ *Bellum Judaicum* which explicates these concerns in extreme; see Ch. 3.5.

<sup>609</sup> Ὁ ψυχῆς ἀνδρείας ἐν γυναικείῳ τῷ σώματι!; Gregory of Nazianzus: *Or.* 15.4; PG 35, 916.

<sup>610</sup> εἶ γε γυναῖκα δεῖ αὐτὴν καλεῖν; John Chrysostom: *Macc.* 1.8; PG 60, 612.

<sup>611</sup> John Chrysostom: *Macc.* 1.6; PG 60, 620.

<sup>612</sup> *ER* 1.16.50.

<sup>613</sup> *SER* 30.

<sup>614</sup> Indeed, she is nursing her youngest son, whose age is counted by the Rabbis to have been less than three years. The nursing scene is found in *ER* 1.16.50; *b Git* 57b; *SER* 50; it is not in *PesR* 43.4. Also in *5 Macc* 5:38, she kisses her last son. According to *ER*, his age was two years six months and six and half hours; according to *SER*, two years six months and seven and half hours.

<sup>615</sup> 4 *Macc* 16:1; 17:9. See e.g. Gregory of Nazianzus: *Or.* 15.4; PG 35, 916-7.

was now lauded both as a behavioral practice and as a high moral ideal”.<sup>616</sup> Shaw’s reading of 4 Maccabees reminds me of that of Hasan-Rokem’s with concern to *Ekhah Rabbati*. Interestingly, the Christian reception seems not to utilize this much while the Rabbinic versions take it into extreme. Perhaps something of a compromise is found in John Chrysostom’s sermon where the martyrs bear the following “identifying marks because of Christ”:

“quite immature youths, an with them an old man and in addition to them an elderly woman, the youth’s mother. What on earth is this, Master? You’re escorting a useless age group into the arena”<sup>617</sup>

So, what quality of hers deserves our wonder first? The weakness of her gender, or the maturity of her years, or the fragile state of her compassions? For these truly are substantial obstacles for the race that requires such great endurance.”<sup>618</sup>

“So, whenever you see a woman who is shaky, elderly, who requires a walking-stick, entering a context and destroying a tyrant’s rage [...] be astonished at Christ’s power.”<sup>619</sup>

The mother is elaborated in rather remarkably contrasting ways. When she is connected to Abraham in the Christian perspective, she seems to follow his paradigm and intensify it; the intensification is shown also in the comparison between the mother and the church. In contrast, in the Rabbinic perspective she arises to confront and challenge him. Moreover, while her advanced age and actions against maternal instincts are emphasized in Christian reception, her maternity and emotionality are highlighted in the Rabbinic versions along with the youth of her sons. Indeed, the incidents are striking, and while both her connectedness to Abraham and and depiction as joyful appear in several cases, one may be able to suggest a common influence.

### 4.3.3. The Reception of the Menorah

Finally, I will take up a theme which is related to the Maccabean martyrs only after 2 and 4 Maccabees. Hereby, I will attempt to comment on Stemberger’s observation, according to which more details about ‘the Maccabees’ emerge into the Rabbinic literature toward the Middle Ages when, “[i]n certain historical circumstances, the Rabbis had access to and found interest in additional

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<sup>616</sup> “[t]he equation of these two virtues – nobility (γενναία) and passive endurance (ὑπομονή) – would have struck the classic male ideology of the city state as contradictory, a moral oxymoron”; Shaw 1996, 278-9. However, Rajak points out that eventually the mother gives the glory to her husband for bringing up the children (4 Macc 18:7-19); Rajak 2001 (1997), 118.

<sup>617</sup> John Chrysostom: *Macc.* 1.1; PG 60, 619.

<sup>618</sup> John Chrysostom: *Macc.* 1.2; PG 60, 619.

<sup>619</sup> John Chrysostom: *Macc.* 1.1; PG 60, 619. Chrysostom quotes 2 Cor 12:9, “his power is perfected in weakness”; *Macc.* 1.2; PG 60, 619.

information from the outside”.<sup>620</sup> Next, I offer an example of what this additional information may have been like.

It is surprisingly regularly that the Christian authors describe the collective of the martyrs comparing them metaphorically with biblical images. Among them the most interesting metaphor for the present discussion is the one with the seven, or eight, lights.

“Thus the seven brothers, united in martyrdom, just as [...] the seven-branched lamp in the tabernacle of witness, and the seven golden candlesticks in the Apocalypse [...] according as we read in the first book of Kings that the barren woman bore seven.”<sup>621</sup>

“How bright is the lamp of the Church that shines with sevenfold light, and furnishes oil for all the lights from the eighth, which is her womb!”<sup>622</sup>

“Die Mutter [...] gleicht der Woche mit den sieben Tagen und dem Leucter mit den sieben Armen”.<sup>623</sup>

The seven-branched lamp is known as the Menorah.<sup>624</sup> The association of the brothers with the Menorah often appears with other associations connected with the biblical number seven, e.g. the seven days of Creation, seven churches in the Revelations.<sup>625</sup> As the metaphorical association does not yet appear in the Books of Maccabees, there are two possibilities for its origins: either the Christians received the Menorah connection to the Maccabean martyrs from their contemporary Jews and their celebration of them, or they made it up.

If the association derives from popular Jewish use, it must have been popular indeed, as the Christian cases presented above are not limited to a specific geographical area or time.<sup>626</sup> However, at least the Rabbinic versions never mention the seven martyred sons in connection to the Menorah. Instead, the Menorah is connected to the Maccabean Revolt, with the purification of the

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<sup>620</sup> Stemberger 1992, 201-2. See Ch. 1.2.

<sup>621</sup> Cyprian: *Fort.* 11 ; CCSL 3:1, 205.

<sup>622</sup> *Quam splendida lucerna Ecclesiae septeno fulgenes lumine, et octavo utero cunctis luminibus oleum subministrans!*; Ambrose: *Jac.* 11.54; PL 14, 636.

<sup>623</sup> Ephraem: *Hymn* 13.1; in Beck 1975, 21.

<sup>624</sup> The Menorah, derives from Exodus; Haran & Gottlieb & Strauss 2007, 49. See e.g. Ex 25:31-40; 37:17-24.

<sup>625</sup> See how Cyprian, for example, describes the seven brothers who fulfilled “the number seven in the sacrament of a perfect fulfillment”, “as the first seven days in the divine plan containing seven thousand years; as the seven spirits and the seven angels who stand and go in and out before the face of God, and the seven-branched lamp in the tabernacle of witness, and the seven golden candlesticks in the Apocalypse, and the seven columns in Solomon, upon which Wisdom builds her house, thus also here the number of seven brothers embracing in the quantity of its number seven churches, according as we read in the first book of Kings that the barren woman bore seven”; Cyprian: *Fort.* 11; CCSL 3:1, 205. Note, that Cyprian, while searching for the biblical seven, has found the barren woman, too.

<sup>626</sup> Cyprian of Carthage (the third century), Ephraem (the fourth-century Edessa) and Ambrose of Milan (the late-fourth-century). Notably, none of these references arise directly from the Antiochian cult of the Maccabean martyrs.

temple and Judas who in fact restored the Menorah. The legendary roots of Hanukkah are composed of these events.

As a matter of fact, Hanukkah is already in 2 Maccabees referred to as the celebration of lights.<sup>627</sup> For example, Josephus calls Hanukkah the Festival of Lights, but he or the Books of Maccabees do not mention the kindling of lights on Hanukkah.<sup>628</sup> In fact, the Hanukkah lamp, which has eight branches, is often connected to the Menorah; however, while the Babylonian Talmud forbids the making of a new copy of the Menorah after it was destroyed with the temple in 70 CE, it does not forbid the Hanukkah lamp.<sup>629</sup> Braunstein has suggested that the eight lights of Hanukkah exemplify the miraculous oil which burned for eight full days;<sup>630</sup> however, she acknowledges that the first Hanukkah lamp appears in Jewish sources only by the Middle Ages.<sup>631</sup>

As I have concluded earlier, the Maccabean martyrs could have thematically been related to the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah.<sup>632</sup> However, despite the connections to a cultic setting – suggested by 2 and 4 Maccabees and also some of the Rabbinic versions of the Maccabean martyrs – the Jewish sources do not provide much information about why and how this celebration took place. Therefore, I consider it theoretically possible that the Christians, who received the Maccabean martyrs and regarded them as biblical, associated them with the Menorah metaphorically. This they might have done, by searching through the Scriptures for representatives of the holy number seven. Because of the association with the Maccabean martyrs, Ambrose suggests an eight-branched candlestick instead of the seven-branched, including the mother. So, even if the Christians had received the Menorah image from the Rabbis, which may indeed have been widely used as the destruction of the temple was much discussed during the early centuries Common Era, Ambrose shows that the number of the lights could be increased from seven to eight, due to the participation of the mother.

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<sup>627</sup> "We prayed to the Lord and were heard, and we offered sacrifice and grain offering, and we lit the lamps and set out the loaves. And now see that you keep the festival of booths in the month of Chislev, in the one hundred eighty-eighth year"; 2 Macc 1:8-9.

<sup>628</sup> Herr 2007a, 332.

<sup>629</sup> Haran & Gottlieb & Strauss 2007, 54. Maybe, indeed, because the Hanukkah lamp was not yet there during the composition of the Talmudic texts.

<sup>630</sup> Braunstein 2007, 334.

<sup>631</sup> Braunstein 2007, 333.

<sup>632</sup> See Ch. 4.2.2. and 4.2.3.

As suggested by Stemberger, the “additional *information from the outside*” may have led the Rabbis to have access to and to find interest in the Maccabees.<sup>633</sup> Furthermore, he specifies this information as something which may have derived from “contacts with the growing Christianity”.<sup>634</sup> Only by receiving the Books of Maccabees, they become aware of their connection to the Maccabean Revolt. Thereby, the Rabbis could have connected an old religious symbol, the Menorah – once restored by Judas Maccabeus but currently forbidden to use by the Talmud, with the Hanukkah lights and its legendary origins in the Maccabean Revolt. Such a new and yet an old symbol was notably connected by their contemporary Christians to eight martyrs who were derived from the legendary roots of Hanukkah as well. Thus, the Christian reception of the Maccabean martyrs might have provided the Jews with “additional information” and contributed to the development of a new religious symbol which they could attach to the celebration of Hanukkah, the eight-branched candle, the Hanukkah candle.

#### **4.3.4. Conclusions**

In this chapter, I have demonstrated the reception of the Maccabean martyrs with thematic examples of their reception. First, I have shown that the law is received in various ways. I see little if any relations between the Rabbinic and Christian cases of reception concerned with the law; rather, they both are occupied with their own notions of it.

On the other hand, the reception of the mother reveals certain points of connection between the Christian and Rabbinic reception. There are scriptural connotations attached to the mother which indicate a common source (perhaps 4 Maccabees?), a shared tradition of interpretation, or mutual influence: the mother is discovered joyful and compared to Abraham. However, both these formal similarities show little correspondence in terms of contents: as a matter of fact, the Christian and Rabbinic elaborations seem rather drastically contrasted with one another. Perhaps, the contrast itself could be taken as an indicator of mutual influence. The elaborations do not seem only different from each other but may indeed be oppositional to one another.

Lastly, the Christian reception of the metaphorical use of the Menorah has led me to suggest that this particular case would indicate mutual influence, as it may have been the Christians who first came up with the eight-branched

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<sup>633</sup> Stemberger 1992, 201-2.

<sup>634</sup> Stemberger 1992, 203.



candlestick, later identified as the Hanukkah lamp. Indeed, this may indicate that *the Christian* reception of the Maccabean martyrs influenced not only the increase of the rabbinic interest in the figures but also the ways in which they received and re-used them.

#### **4.4. Conclusions: Were the Maccabean Martyrs Christianized?**

I have so far tried to restrain from discussing the claim of Christianization of the Maccabean martyrs. This has partly to do with the fact that the claim is focused only on the Christian reception of the Maccabean martyrs, whereas I accentuate both the Christian and Rabbinic reception. Furthermore, I have found it difficult to understand and define what exactly is meant by Christianization. Now finally, as I have already made conclusions along the way in this chapter, I turn to discuss the claim of Christianization of the Maccabean martyrs.

To begin with an attempt to capture a definition, it seems to me that Rouwhorst understands two distinctive things by the Christianization: strictly speaking, Christianization has to do with the cult and it implies a Jewish origin of it, which has been Christianized;<sup>635</sup> however, with regard to the Christian sermons, he corresponds Christianization with spiritualization, de-contextualization of the original persecution setting and replacing it with something else.<sup>636</sup> van Henten, discussing sources prior to the emergence of the cult, makes a notion of an “overall Christianization”, which implies “considerable interpretation” of the identity of the Maccabean martyrs, as their “ethnic and cultural-religious identities are completely ignored” in it, by anonymizing, pluralizing and generalizing of their individual deeds.<sup>637</sup> Basically, this is how the Christianization of the Maccabean martyrs rolls. My analysis has led me to both disagree and agree with the claim of Christianization and next I explicate how.

To me it seems that Origen and Cyprian do not consider the Jewishness of the Maccabean martyrs an issue. Cyprian treats all his biblical examples in a manner which does not necessarily highlight their Jewishness. He considers them as past examples of martyrdom whereas his contemporary martyrs provide the present examples. The line of thought only implies that, according to his

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<sup>635</sup> Rouwhorst 2005, 84.

<sup>636</sup> Rouwhorst 2005, 90-1.

<sup>637</sup> This is present already in Hebrews 11:37-38; van Henten 2010a, 376. In a similar manner, van Henten concludes that Origen has participated in the “overall Christianization of the Maccabean martyrs”, by leaving out their “Jewish cultural practices” and “the markers of their Jewish identity”; van Henten 2010b, 349.

understanding and definition, there are no more non-Christian martyrs, no other contemporary just and good, only Christians. Had Origen used other biblical examples as extensively as he used the Maccabean martyrs, I believe we would catch him at “Christianizing” them in a similar way.<sup>638</sup> Thus, I claim that the Maccabean martyrs are no more Christianized than any other biblical figures of the “Old Testament”. Origen as well as Cyprian interprets the Scripture (including at least 2 Maccabees) from their own Christian perspective. To that extent, they are guilty of Christianizing.

The sermons of John Chrysostom and Augustine indicate a need to argue strongly for the Christian right to venerate the martyrs over the Jews. Doing that, they Christianize the martyrs, that is, call them Christian, not only alike. According to Rouwhorst, there is a strong tendency to spiritualize the martyrdoms in the works of all the three homilists, to do away with the motif of persecution and to replace it with philosophical, political, or theological themes.<sup>639</sup> Rouwhorst makes a good point by showing how Gregory, too, relativizes the exact material points central for Judaism when he praises the devotion of the Maccabean martyrs.<sup>640</sup> I believe that the Christianization has essentially to do with the cult. By the cult and the veneration of the Maccabean martyrs, the martyrs are identified with other martyr-saints more than with other biblical heroes; thus, the basis for their identity changes. The cult initiates the establishment of ‘the Maccabees’ as a separate identified group, not only biblical figures found in the Scripture. For a reason or another, the cult provoked a need to Christianize the martyrs, which is shown in e.g. John Chrysostom’s homily, *de Eleazaro et de septem pueris*, and Augustine’s sermons, explicitly in their construction of a paradigmatic Jew who claims the martyrs to be theirs.

If we are to believe the non-alignment of the Syriac Christian sources, Aphrahat manages to participate independently in the same state of Christianization which takes place in Origen’s and Cyprian’s writing: he makes the biblical heroes into “martyrs and true confessors”. There is however a dimension in his approach, which makes a difference to me. Aphrahat’s

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<sup>638</sup> In addition to the reference to the Maccabean martyrs, Origen mentions only the youths of Daniel (*Mart.* 33; Origenes Werke, 28-9) and Abraham (*Mart.* 5; Origenes Werke, 6-7).

<sup>639</sup> Rouwhorst 2005, 90-1. Rouwhorst goes explicitly against Martha Vinson who claims that Gregory’s homily arises from a context of actual persecution, that of Julian the Apostate; Vinson 1994, 166, 170.

<sup>640</sup> Rouwhorst 2005, 94.

*Demonstration 21* begins with a question posed by the heathens and Jews,<sup>641</sup> which leads the author into a rhetoric debate with those Jews.<sup>642</sup> The debate reveals its rhetoric characteristic as it evolves into an explanation addressing his co-believers of why God allows persecution, based on biblical figures who were persecuted like Jesus.<sup>643</sup> Now, differing from Origen and Cyprian, Aphrahat has an anonymous Jewish figure included in his rhetoric. As noted, a reference to such a paradigmatic other does not necessitate an actual debate. What it necessitates, however, is an awareness of the fact that some might question or even reject the biblical examples because of their Jewishness.

This potential in Aphrahat's *Demonstration 21* is, in my opinion, is not reflected in Origen and Cyprian but certainly found in the sermons of not only John Chrysostom and Augustine but also Gregory. Here, as I have suggested, we discover a change in the basis of their identity: basically, the sources prior to the emergence of the Christian martyr-saint paradigm associate the Maccabean martyrs with other biblical heroes, while in the latter cases their identity derives from the equalization with that paradigm. Thus, in contrast to the claim, according to which practically all Christian sources receptive of the Maccabean martyrs seem to illustrate their Christianization, I suggest a distinction between the approaching of the figures from a Christian perspective and their deliberate Christianizing, the construction of their identity *against* its Jewishness.

Otherwise, that is, if the spiritual use is not separated from the Christianization, 'Christianization' implies almost everything that is done with/to the martyrs by a Christian. And if so, then I think the author of 4 Maccabees should also be considered guilty of a similar cause, as he exploits the martyrs for his own philosophical-nationalist agenda, interpreting them "considerably", "anonymizing, pluralizing and generalizing of their individual deeds".<sup>644</sup> Furthermore, we have seen that just as the Maccabean martyrs are later claimed to have died in imitation of Christ, they are also connected to the notion of *kiddush ha-Shem*.<sup>645</sup> In my opinion, both these phenomena – both the Christian and the

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<sup>641</sup> Aphrahat: *Dem.* 11.1.

<sup>642</sup> Aphrahat: *Dem.* 11.2-7.

<sup>643</sup> Aphrahat: *Dem.* 11.-9-20. And "These memorials have I written unto thee, my beloved, concerning Jesus Who was persecuted, and the righteous who were persecuted, are in order that those who today are persecuted for the sake of the persecuted Jesus, may be comforted"; *Dem.* 11.21.

<sup>644</sup> See above, esp. n. 637. Also Rouwhorst has pointed out that 4 Macc 'spiritualizes' the martyrs; Rouwhorst 2005, 83.

<sup>645</sup> See Ch. 4.1.3.

Jewish exploitation of the figures – reflect not only the continuous and increasing importance of the Maccabean martyrs but also the flexibility of religious thought to absorb and adapt new and old ideas. In addition, although I will say this with a caution, the thematic points of connection between the Rabbinic and Christian reception (pointed out in Ch. 4.3.) may indicate that not only did the Christians ‘take from the Jews’ but perhaps also the Jews may have exploited the ‘Christianized’ images of the martyrs.

## 5. Conclusions

In this chapter, I briefly summarize the main conclusions of my study.<sup>646</sup> After the summary, I discuss and evaluate my approach and the usability of the categorization applied in this study. Lastly, I will try to bring my results into a wider context, that of ‘the parting of ways’ of Jews and Christians, to see if the reception of the Maccabean martyrs can increase our understanding of the nature of Jewish-Christian relations in Antiquity and Late Antiquity.<sup>647</sup>

My study has attempted a reception-historical analysis of the Maccabean martyrs in antique and late-antique Jewish and Christian sources. The concept of ‘reception’ has fundamentally to do with re-use and interpretation of a certain text within new texts. In a religious tradition, certain elements become re-circulated and thus their reception may reflect the development of that particular tradition. The subject of the study, the Maccabean martyrs, first appears in 2 Maccabees 6-7 in early-first century BCE. However, I have not analyzed the reception of that particular text but the reception of particular figures, who are basically known as Eleazar, the seven brothers and their mother, martyred during the Maccabean Revolt (as in 2 and 4 Maccabees and most of the Christian cases of reception), or more anonymously simply the mother and her seven sons (as in the Rabbinic cases of reception). The aim has been to analyze the ways in which these figures are exploited in early Christian and Rabbinic sources.

I have divided my sources into two categories and my analysis has been presented in two parts. First, I have analyzed the role that the Maccabean martyrs have been given within Jewish and Christian historiographical sources, focusing on their role given in the depictions of the Maccabean Revolt (Chapter 3). Among the sources analyzed, 1 and 2 Maccabees are composed at approximately the same time and deal with approximately the same events. However, while the

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<sup>646</sup> For more extensive conclusions, see Chapters 3.6., 4.1.5., 4.2.3., 4.3.4., and finally, 4.5.

<sup>647</sup> For a brief introduction to the ‘parting of ways’, see Ch. 1.4., and especially Ch. 1.4.2.

Hasmoneans are the key characters in 1 Maccabees, 2 Maccabees seems to leave potential room for several effective figures, including the martyrs. The historiographical sections in 4 Maccabees build on 2 Maccabees. 4 Maccabees in turn devotes a historically effective role solely to the martyrs. The embracing reception of the martyrdoms leads towards marginalization of several other potentially effective historiographical elements in 4 Maccabees: not only the Hasmonean military heroes but also the temple as the centre of the Jewish religious life and, as I have suggested, the activity of God as the Lord of history.

As the (late) antique Rabbinic literature does not deal with the Maccabean martyrs in their historical context, Josephus provides the only Jewish historiographical sources dealing with the Maccabean period in addition to the Books of Maccabees. However, there is no explicit reception of the martyrs in historiographical works. I have analyzed Mattathias' farewell speech in *Antiquitates Judaicae*, in comparison to 2 Maccabees 6-7 and concluded that Josephus uses the exemplary ethos of all the Maccabean martyrs in his refashioning of Mattathias' exhortation to military heroism.

In Christian historiographical sources, the martyrs' role grows in importance: among the sources discussed, Hippolytus and Eusebius make only non-specific mentions of the Maccabean martyrs, Aphrahat knows them by name, and Augustine seems to be well aware of the martyrs and yet does not credit them historically. In fact, it is not before a Christian cult of the Maccabean martyrs has been established, that Christian historiographies consider the martyrs historically effective. This is demonstrated by Jon Malalas' *Chronicle*, in which the relics of the Maccabean martyr-saints are given attention over Judas' victories or the whole Revolt. As this takes place in Antioch, I suggest that the cult – with relics and sites related to it – must have been effective in the process of making the martyrs emerge in Christian historiography. This development suits the view presented by Peter Brown, according to which the relics of the saints gained a prominent position in Christianity toward the end of the fourth century.

In sum, there was vibrant interest among Greek-speaking Jews in writing the Maccabean Revolt during the centuries around the turn of the Common Era. The interest ceased by the Rabbinic Era and did not reappear before the Middle Ages, creating a gap in the reception of the martyrs in connection to the

Maccabean period.<sup>648</sup> 4 Maccabees is a lone wolf among the antique Jewish sources, trying to make the Maccabean martyrs the most effective figures in the history of the Maccabean Revolt. In contrast, Josephus seems to have repressed their memory. In the Christian sources, despite their presumed interest in the Maccabean martyrs from the first century Common Era onwards, their reception in terms of historiography increases only along with the emergence of the Christian veneration of the Maccabean martyrs as martyr-saints. Eusebius and Augustine, even if they seem to relate to the Maccabean martyrs in a positive way, do not yet consider them historically effective. Additional (and probably later) sources such as *5 Maccabees* and the Slavonic version of Josephus' *Bellum Judaicum* illustrate that the Maccabean martyrs do not disappear in historiographical sources but are to be remembered.

Secondly, I have analyzed the reception of the Maccabean martyrs in sources, which make use of them as paradigmatic figures (Chapter 4). I have suggested that the martyrs are paradigmatic in the context of martyrdom, persecution and destruction. In Christian sources, these ideas are represented in discourses of martyrdom, in martyr accounts, and already in the New Testament. In Rabbinic Judaism, they are reflected in the notion of *kiddush ha-Shem*, on one hand, and in martyr narratives provoked by the Roman persecutions, on the other.

The memory of the Maccabean martyrs has influenced the early Christian literature from its very beginning. The influence of 4 Maccabees on early Christian martyr accounts shows already toward the end of the second century. Explicit attention and positive evaluation of the Maccabean martyrs is found in Christian sources increasingly from the third century onwards. By the beginning of the fourth century the latest, we have several appearances of a paradigmatic mother figure of the martyrs, who functions in ways similar to the Maccabean mother: she encourages, strengthens, and sees off the martyrs to death; she carries their suffering in her body and is mystically martyred with them. The Maccabean martyrs play a significant role in the Christian reception within the setting of persecution and martyrdom. I have suggested that their effectively suit this setting because they embodied admirable qualities of martyrs and, most importantly, because they were considered biblical.

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<sup>648</sup> Indeed, the Jewish sources place the martyrs in the historical context of the Maccabean Revolt in the first or early-second century (4 Macc) and again in *Josippon*, in the tenth century. Meanwhile, the martyrs are placed in the historical context of the Roman persecutions.

Thematically the Maccabean martyrs may be related to *kiddush ha-Shem*, a Rabbinic notion which touches on the issue of martyrdom. However, as the term, *kiddush ha-Shem*, is frequently used in the Jewish sources only from the third century onwards, its application to the Maccabean martyrdoms as they are found in the Books of Maccabees, is problematic. I have compared the Rabbinic versions of the Maccabean martyrs with the Books of Maccabees and concluded that the former have been modified with elements which are characteristic of Rabbinic martyr narratives. However, especially the comparison between the Rabbinic versions of the Maccabean martyrs and rabbi Aqiva shows that rabbi Aqiva seems to be more paradigmatic in terms of martyrdom than the mother and her seven sons. Instead, they appear paradigmatic in the context of destruction and perhaps the reconstruction of the Jewish identity after the destruction of the Second Temple and connect with questions of suffering and death in that way. I have suggested that the Rabbinic reception of the Maccabean martyrs shows how the notion of Jewish martyrdom arises from experiences of destruction and despair, not only from heroic confession of faith in the face of persecution. The Jewish martyrdom is nourished by the environment of survival and preservation of a distinct identity amidst of manifest destruction.

Before the emergence of a Christian cult of the Maccabean martyrs, their identity is derived namely from their biblical position. However, in the homiletic context, their Jewish identity is debated and sometimes reconstructed as fundamentally 'Christian', despite of their pre-Christian origins. The debate about their identity seems to be limited to the Christian sources, since nothing similar is found in the Rabbinic versions of their martyrdom. Investigating the Christian reception of the Maccabean martyrs, I have discovered a change in the basis of their identity: basically, the sources prior to the emergence of the Christian paradigmatic martyr-saint (that is, before the end of the fourth century) associate the Maccabean martyrs with other biblical heroes, while in the latter cases their identity derives from the equalization with those Christian martyr-saints. Often, when they are equalized and identified with the Christian martyr-saints, they are also portrayed as more or less Christian. Thus, I have suggested a distinction between the approaching of the figures from a Christian perspective and their deliberate Christianizing, the construction of their identity *against* its Jewishness.

### *The Evaluation of the Study*

At this point, I believe it is important to evaluate the categorization used in this study. The sources were categorized in order to better capture the variety and diversity of sources. The categorization provided me with an opportunity to look at the historical efficacy of the Maccabean martyrs in terms of their thorough exploitation or (almost) complete repression. The first part of the analysis further showed how peculiarly the Maccabean martyrs appear, disappear, and reappear in Christian and Jewish collective memories of the past. However, the first part of the analysis also confirmed that historiography carries within itself paradigmatic functions in various ways. Several, if not all, the cases analyzed show that history is not written for the past issues but for the present. Some might take such a conclusion as an argument against the categorization presented. Indeed, I am satisfied with the categorization itself, although I admit that the categories could perhaps have been better named. However, I have not experienced the paradigmatic implications of historiography as a problem, quite the contrary. I believe the first part of the analysis has provided me with a better understanding of not only the reception of the Maccabean martyrs in Judaism but also the lack of it. It has further widened my vision of the Christian reception and made me notice that the Maccabean martyrs, even if counted among the first martyrs in history, do not necessarily play such a significant role in the Christian sense of history.

In the second part of the analysis, the context(s) of reception – while not being as easily defined as ‘historiography’ – have given me a chance to look at the martyrs in a wider connection with traditions of interpretation of the early Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism. Whereas I have perhaps failed to captivate such extensive phenomena as ‘Christian martyrdom’ or ‘*kiddush ha-Shem*’, I believe I have managed to describe the roles and functions given to the Maccabean martyrs with regard to idea(l)s of Jewish and Christian martyrdom in Antiquity and Late Antiquity. Furthermore, my efforts at gathering information about the martyrs’ appearance in a cultic setting have proven worthwhile. My observations have been defined and explicated in accordance with my choice to approach the figures as paradigmatic examples potentially fundamental to a religious tradition. However, in this approach, I have been able to make at least thematic comparisons between Rabbinic and Christian reception. Although this all might have been achievable without such a categorization, I think it has benefitted the explication of the results of this study.



Earlier, I have referred to the relatively new approach to Jewish-Christian historical studies, the “parting of ways”.<sup>649</sup> So, finally, does my study of the Maccabean martyrs contribute to or comment on this outline? As I have approached the sources within different categories, and also thematically, the results of the analysis show that the Rabbinic and Christian cases of reception were not only non-reliant on each other but also that they linked to one another. Especially the scriptural connections of the Maccabean mother reveal the points of possible contacts. Indeed, I have concluded that the reception of the Maccabean martyrs hints toward a continuous relationship, reveals shared traditions, occasionally even processes of self-definition of one against the other. However, the reception also demonstrates the independence and separateness of the two traditions in their expressions and explications of their special concerns.

Thus, the reception-history of the Maccabean martyrs reflects both a shared and yet a separate world of Jews and Christians in Antiquity. The Christian and the Jewish reception reflect not only the continuous and increasing importance of the Maccabean martyrs but also the flexibility of religious thought to absorb and adapt new and to re-use old ideas. The points of thematic connections between the Rabbinic and Christian reception may indicate that not only did the Christians ‘take from the Jews’ but also Jews exploited the Christian reception of the martyrs. Moreover, my study suggests that the concerns about the Maccabean martyrs, the mutual exchange and influence related to their reception, are continued long after “the long fourth century”. A thought, image, tradition, or a conception of self is never static or self-contained. The whole notion of distinctiveness relies on the presence of others.

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