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Judith and Holofernes: An Analysis of the Emotions in the Killing Scene (Jdt 12:10–13:9)

1 Introduction

What is an emotion? This question is not easily answered. Which physical, mental, facial, and vocal expressions do we interpret as emotions? The *Encyclopædia Britannica* defines the generic term “emotion” as “a complex experience of consciousness, bodily sensation, and behaviour that reflects the personal significance of a thing, an event, or a state of affairs.”¹

Compared to the English language and most modern (European) languages which have, in their respective linguistic forms, the generic term “emotions” under which they subsume different kinds of feelings, there is no equivalent term in Ancient Greek.² Speaking of “emotions” in Classical or Koine Greek we usually refer to the term πάθος *pathos*. But πάθος according to Liddell-Scott means “*that which happens* to a person or thing” and “*what one has experienced*”.³ Derived from the verb πάσχω “to suffer, to experience”, πάθος in the plural means a broad variety of sentiments, which are often rendered by such words as “anger, fear, love, pity, indignation, envy” and which are sometimes called “emotions”, but – and this is important – πάθος is not actually identical to what we call emotions. David Konstan writes in his book *The Emotions of the Ancient Greek. Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (2007): “The specific

1 Encyclopædia Britannica Online. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines emotion as “a. originally: an agitation of mind; an excited mental state. Subsequently: any strong mental or instinctive feeling, as pleasure, grief, hope, fear, etc., deriving esp. from one’s circumstances, mood, or relationship with others. b. As a mass noun: strong feelings, passion; (more generally) instinctive feeling as distinguished from reasoning or knowledge”; the expression “emotion” comes from “mid 16th century (denoting a public disturbance): from French *émotion*, from *émouvoir* ‘excite’, based on Latin *emovere*, from *e-* (variant of *ex-*) ‘out’ + *movere* ‘move’. The current sense dates from the early 19th century.”

2 See Morton Braund/Gill, *Passions*.

3 Liddell/Scott, *Lexicon*, 1285: “In classical Greek, *pathos* may refer more generally to what befalls a person, often in the negative sense of an accident or misfortune, although it may also bear the neutral significance of a condition or state of affairs”; Konstan, *Emotions*, 3–4.

sense of ‘emotion’ is in part conditioned by this penumbra of connotations: in so far as a *pathos* is a reaction to an impinging event or circumstance, it looks to the outside stimulus to which it responds.”⁴ Obviously, there is an essential, semantical incongruity between our term “emotion” and the Greek term πάθος.⁵

The question regarding “emotions” is made even more complex by focusing on emotions in texts. What do we perceive as emotions in texts? Or more precisely, which text signals do we perceive as “emotions”? How are emotions constructed and described in fictional texts?

These are the questions I wish to ask regarding the book of Judith. Since Renate Egger-Wenzel has already described emotions in the book of Judith,⁶ my intention here is to focus on the killing scene in the book of Judith and any potential emotions in this scene. Before doing this, I want to utilize the phenomenological approach of Aaron Ben-Ze’ev in order to describe and categorize the emotions in the killing scene of the book of Judith.

2 A phenomenological approach: what is an emotion?

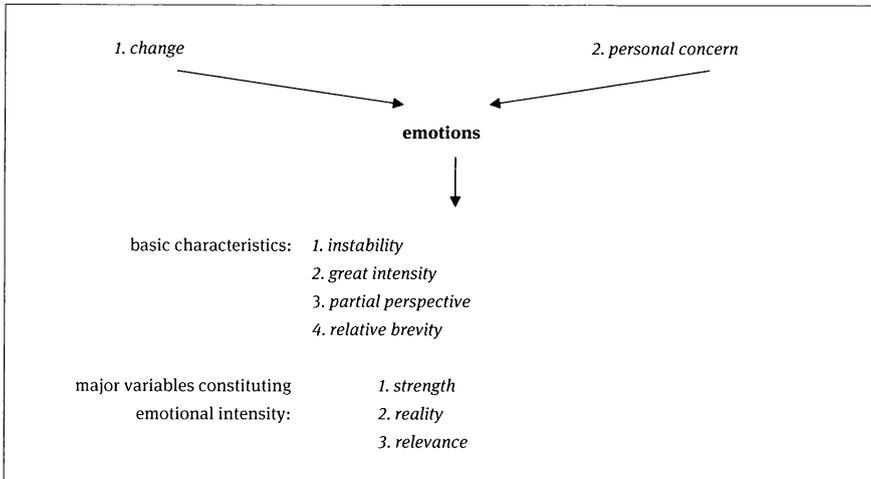
Aaron Ben-Ze’ev answers the question “What is an emotion?” in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*, 2010 by defining categories for emotions.⁷ In the light of his definitions, I have summarized the main aspects of the emotions described in the book of Judith in the following diagram:

4 Konstan, *Emotions*, 4.

5 In the LXX, πάθος is used 58 times in the Greek text of 4 Maccabees. A topic in Maccabees is the philosophical question of πάθος: εἰ αὐτοδέσποτός ἐστιν τῶν παθῶν ὁ εὐσεβῆς λογισμός “whether pious reason is absolute master of passions” (4 Macc 1:1). Besides 4 Maccabees, πάθος is used elsewhere only twice: πάθος as “misfortune” for ἔλεος “mourning” in Job 30:31 and in Prov 25:20, a verse, which was radically changed in comparison with the Hebrew text. In other words: beside 4 Macc, the LXX only rarely uses the word πάθος.

6 Egger-Wenzel, *Judith’s Path*, 189–223.

7 See also Deigh, *Concepts*, 17–40; Landweer/Renz, *Emotionstheorien*; Goldie, *Oxford Handbook*.



In emotions as complex mental phenomena, *change* and *personal concern* are typical elements.

1. First: The typical cause of emotions is change: “Emotions typically occur when we perceive positive or negative *significant changes in our personal situation*, or in the situation of those related to us. A major positive or negative change significantly improves or interrupts a stable situation relevant to our concern.”⁸
2. Second: The typical emotional concern is a comparatively personal one: “Emotions occur when a change is evaluated as relevant to our personal concerns. Concerns are our short- or long-term disposition towards a preference for particular states of the world or of the self. Emotions serve to monitor and safeguard our personal concerns; they give the eliciting event its significance. An important difference between general and emotional changes is that the latter are of great personal significance. [...] An emotional change is always related to a certain personal frame of reference against which its significance is evaluated. Emotional meaning is mainly comparative. The emotional environment contains not only what is and what will be experienced but also all that could be or that one wishes will be experienced. For the emotional system, all such possibilities are posited as simultaneously available and are compared with each other. [...] The comparison underlying emotional significance encompasses the mental

⁸ Ben-Ze'ev, Thing, 42.

construction of the availability of an alternative situation. The more available the alternative [...] the more intensive the emotion.”⁹

Furthermore, emotions may be described by four basic characteristics: *instability*, *great intensity*, *partial perspective*, and *relative brevity*.

1. “Instability of the mental (as well as the psychological) system is a basic characteristic of emotions. Emotions indicate a transition in which the preceding context has changed but no new context has yet stabilized. Emotions are like storm and fire – they are unstable states that signify some agitation; they are intense, occasional, and limited in duration.”¹⁰
2. Great intensity is the second, typical characteristic: “Emotions are intense reactions. In emotions, the mental system has not yet adapted to the given change, and, due to its significance, the change requires the mobilization of many resources. No wonder that emotions are associated with urgency and heat.”¹¹
3. Emotions are partial because “they are focused on a *narrow* target, such as one person or very few people, and they express a *personal* and interested perspective. Emotions direct and colour our attention by selecting what attracts and holds it; in this sense, emotions are similar to heat-seeking missiles, having no other concern but to find the heat-generating target. Emotions address practical concerns from a personal perspective. [...] Focusing upon fewer objects increases the resources available for each and hence increases emotional intensity.”¹²
4. The fourth characteristic of a typical emotion is brevity: “The mobilization of all resources to focus on one event cannot last forever. A system cannot be unstable for a long period and still function normally. [...] The exact duration of an emotion is a matter for dispute: depending on the type of emotion and the circumstances, it can last from a few seconds to a few hours and sometimes even longer.”¹³

9 Ben-Ze’ev, Thing, 44.

10 Ben-Ze’ev, Thing, 45.

11 Ben-Ze’ev, Thing, 45.

12 Ben-Ze’ev, Thing, 45.

13 Ben-Ze’ev, Thing, 46. Beside these four basic characteristics, there are four basic components (*cognition*, *evaluation*, *motivation*, and *feelings*): Ben-Ze’ev, Thing, 47–50: “The difference between typical characteristics and basic components is that characteristics are properties of the whole emotional experience, whereas components express a conceptual division of the elements of this experience” (47).

There are three major variables constituting emotional intensity: *strength*, *reality*, and *relevance*.

1. “The event’s *strength* is a major factor determining the intensity of an emotional experience.”¹⁴
2. The second variable is the degree of *reality*: “the more we believe a situation to be real, the more intense the emotion.”¹⁵
3. The third variable is *relevance*: “the more relevant the event, the greater the emotional significance of an emotional experience. [...] Emotional relevance typically refers either (a) to the achievement of our goal, or (b) to our self-esteem.”¹⁶

Taking into account this description of emotions, we should now approach the question of emotions in the book of Judith by asking about its typical emotional elements and basic characteristics, as well as its variables that constitute emotional intensity, and its background circumstances.

3 Emotions in the book of Judith

In the art history of the Renaissance era, especially in the Christian art of Western Europe, there are two scenes from the book of Judith. The first scene describes the moment when Judith kills Holofernes.¹⁷ In the second scene, which is

¹⁴ Ben-Ze’ev, Thing, 50.

¹⁵ Ben-Ze’ev, Thing, 51.

¹⁶ Ben-Ze’ev, Thing, 51. Furthermore, there are three major variables constituting the background circumstances: *accountability*, *readiness*, and *deservingness*. The first is *accountability*: “*Accountability* (or *responsibility*), [...] refers to the nature of the agency generating the emotional encounter. Major issues relevant here are: (a) degree of *controllability*, (b) invested *efforts*, and (c) *intent*. The greater the degree of controllability there was, the more effort we invested, and the more intended the result was, the more significant the event usually is and the greater the emotional intensity it generates. [...] The variable of *readiness* measures the cognitive change in our mind; major factors in this variable are unexpectedness (or anticipation) and uncertainty. Unexpectedness, which may be measured by how surprised one is by the situation, is widely recognized as central emotions. [...] The perceived *deservingness* (equity, fairness) of our situation or that of others is of great importance in determining the nature and intensity of emotions. No one wants to be unjustly treated, or receive what is contrary to one’s wish”; Ben-Ze’ev, Thing, 52–53.

¹⁷ Donatello (1396–1466), *Judith and Holofernes* (1459); Mattia Preti, *Judith and Holofernes* (1656–1661); Sandro Botticelli, *Judith Leaving the Tent of Holofernes* (1497–1500); Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–1653), *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (1612–13) and *Judith Beheading Holofernes*

often portrayed in art, Judith holds the severed head of Holofernes in her hand.¹⁸ Other scenes, however, as, for example, when Judith leaves the Assyrian camp, or Judith is in Bethulia, are rarely portrayed.¹⁹ Obviously, throughout the history of reception, artists perceived the killing scene and the severed head of Holofernes as the most exciting, or maybe the most scandalous, scene for themselves and for the viewers of their art objects. One may reasonably conclude that these scenes caused the most intense and perhaps the most diverse emotions. That is why I wish to focus on the two main protagonists, Holofernes and Judith. Which emotions are presented by Holofernes and Judith?²⁰ How may these emotions be phenomenologically described? How are the pragmatics of the texts to be evaluated?

3.1 Emotions of Holofernes

In Judith 12, Holofernes sends invitations to a private feast. Given the identity of the invited guests, who are limited to “his slaves alone” (τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ μόνοις), i.e. the closest confidants of Holofernes, it becomes apparent that this social activity of Holofernes, arranged by his servant Bagoas, is a private drinking feast (Jdt 12:10; 13:1). Those who are associated with Holofernes only through their official duties, i.e. his officers, are excluded from the invitation (οὐδένα τῶν πρὸς ταῖς χρεῖαις). The invitation is exclusively extended to his closest friends, with the exception of the special guest, Judith, the main actual protagonist of the evening.

The most emotional reactions in the whole of the book of Judith are described when Judith enters the tent of Holofernes: καὶ εἰσελθοῦσα ἀνέπεσεν Ἰουδιθ καὶ ἐξέστη ἡ καρδία Ολοφέρνηου ἐπ’ αὐτήν καὶ ἐσαλεύθη ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἦν κατεπίθυμος σφόδρα τοῦ συγγενέσθαι μετ’ αὐτῆς καὶ ἐτήρει καιρὸν τοῦ ἀπατήσθαι αὐτὴν ἀφ’ ἧς ἡμέρας εἶδεν αὐτήν “And Judith entered and reclined,

(1620); Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Judith and Holofernes* (1598/99); Jacopo Tintoretto, *Judith and Holofernes* (1578); Johann Liss, *Judith and Holofernes* (1628); Franz von Stuck, *Judith and Holofernes* (1926); Cindy Sherman, *Untitled # 228* (1990); Judith Samen, *Judith and Holofernes* (1995).

18 Mantegna, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (1495); Christofano Allori, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (1613); Hans Baldung Grien, *Judith* (1480–1545); Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (1531); Gustav Klimt, *Judith I* (1901) and *Judith II* (1909).

19 For example, Sandro Botticelli, *The Return of Judith to Bethulia* (1470–1472); Francesco Solimena, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes* (1728–1733); Artemisia Gentileschi, *Judith and her Maidservant* (1613–1614) and numerous others.

20 Schmitz/Engel, *Buch*.

and Holofernes's heart was beside itself for her, and his spirit reeled, and he was filled with a violent lust to lie with her. And he had been watching for a time to seduce her from the day he saw her" (Jdt 12:16; translation according to NETS).

The effect Judith has on Holofernes while she reclines on the fleece, drinking and eating before him, is described in a fourfold way:

First: καὶ ἐξέστη ἡ καρδία Ολοφέρνηου ἐπ' αὐτήν "and Holofernes's heart was beside itself for her". Four times in the book of Judith people are beside themselves: three times with horror (Jdt 11:16; 13:17; 15:1), but this time with sexual ecstasy. In the LXX the phrase "the heart is beside itself" (ἐξίστημι + καρδία) is mostly used in the context of fear or horror (Gen 42:28; Josh 2:11; 1 Sam 4:13; 28:5; Jer 4:9), and only in Isa 60:5 does it describe elated feelings in reference to Jerusalem.

Second: καὶ ἐσαλεύθη ἡ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ "and his spirit reeled". The verb σαλεύομαι "to shake" is used a second time in Jdt 16:15 against the background of a theophany in Mic 1:4 which describes an intense shaking that can even influence the foundations of mountains.

Third: καὶ ἦν κατεπίθυμος σφόδρα τοῦ συγγενέσθαι μετ' αὐτῆς "and he was filled with a violent lust to lie with her": The verb "to be with/to come together with" (συγγίνομαι) has a sexual sense (as in Gen 19:5; 39:10; Sus 11th, 39th).

Fourth: καὶ ἐτήρει καιρὸν τοῦ ἀπατήσαι αὐτήν ἀφ' ἧς ἡμέρας εἶδεν αὐτήν "And he had been watching for a time to seduce her from the day he saw her": Because of this intention, Holofernes was waiting for the right time (καιρός, q.v. Jdt 13:5; 16:21) in which to carry out his seduction of Judith. The verb "seduce" (ἀπατάω, q.v. Jdt 9:3; 13:16) is, in combination with the nouns "beguilement, allurements, charm" ἀπάτη Jdt 9:3, 10, 13; 16:8 and ἀπάτησις Jdt 10:4), an important word in the narrative. The meaning of the word, ranging from "beguilement, deception" to "seduction", is modelled after the language used in connection with the rape of Dinah in Gen 34, specifically in the reaction of Dina's brother Simeon when he learns about the rape of his sister (Jdt 9:3). In Jdt 12:16 the lexeme ἀπατ- is used to describe the intention of Holofernes, thereby making explicit what may have been clear from the start, but was not reported directly, that is to say, that Holofernes, from the first day that he saw Judith (Jdt 10:23), was planning nothing other than sexual intercourse with her. Judith's deception, on the other hand, feigning willingness to have sexual intercourse, serves the purpose of saving her city and ending the threat to Israel.

What is interesting about this fourfold description of Holofernes's reaction at seeing Judith is that only a few words are used that clearly describe emotions, and these descriptions are *intense*, according to Aaron Ben-Ze'ev's categories:

The first aspect is chance. Although Israel's refusal to submit to Holofernes resulted in an intense emotional reaction by Holofernes in Jdt 5:1, 3, Holofer-

nes's reaction to Judith is more intensely emotional. This is due to the fact that the second strand of typical causes of emotions comes into play: personal concern. While Israel's refusal affects Holofernes only in his role as a soldier and general, the encounter with Judith deeply effects his masculinity, and himself as a person. Here, the aspects of change and personal concern are the strongest.

Holofernes's situation is characterized by great intensity, and his intense sexual desire for Judith limits him to a partial perspective. Holofernes only perceives what serves to fulfil his sexual wishes. He completely dismisses everything that could interfere with his plan, or make him change his mind. Led by his sexual emotions, he reacts in a highly unprofessional manner, and is not able to see the potential danger that could arise for himself, his army and the order that he had received from Nabuchodonosor.

This leads to a situation of high instability. This instability is intensified by Holofernes's heavy drinking. He drinks more wine than he has ever drunk before in his whole life (Jdt 12:20; regarding the motif of drunkenness as a preliminary phase of death and defeat, cf. Jer 28:57 LXX // 51:57 MT). Because of this excessive drinking Holofernes loses all control over the situation. As a result of his voluntary incapacity, his army, his royal instruction, and he himself, are all in danger. That this emotional situation is of relative brevity, and will soon change, is a fact not realized by Holofernes, but surely by the readers of the book of Judith.

An emotional intensity is created by the powerful description of the event and the atmosphere of reality, since everything is arranged in a way that should lead to Holofernes and Judith spending the night together – something he (thinks he) will achieve. Although it is a private drinking bout, Holofernes is under great peer pressure, a pressure described by himself in his conversation with Bagoas: ἰδοὺ γὰρ αἰσχρὸν τῷ προσώπῳ ἡμῶν εἰ γυναῖκα τοιαύτην παρήσομεν οὐχ ὀμιλήσαντες²¹ αὐτῇ ὅτι ἐὰν ταύτην μὴ ἐπισπασώμεθα²² καταγέλασεται ἡμῶν “For behold, if we allow such a woman to pass by without having intercourse with her, it will be a source of shame for our face, for if we fail to gain this one, she will mock us” (Jdt 12:12). The verb καταγέλασεται (verb indicative future third person singular) may be understood as a feminine form “she will mock”, or as a neuter form “one would mock”. On the one hand, Holofernes wants to leave no doubt about his masculinity in the matter of his

²¹ The verb ὀμιλέω encompasses a wide semantical spectrum, ranging from conversation and talk to being together and having intercourse (cf. Sus 37 LXX, 54th, 57, 58).

²² The verb ἐπισπάζομαι can acquire a more specific sexual overtone through its context (cf. Gen 39:12), then conveying a sense of seduction, or even sexual violence.

guest, Judith. On the other hand, he is anxious not to lose the respect of his men and his authority in this (masculine) environment, since a missed opportunity would leave him open to mockery. For this reason, Holofernes considers it disgraceful (αἰσχρός), if he fails to enjoy a sexual encounter with Judith. It should, however, be acknowledged that the idea that Judith would mock him if he did not sleep with her, represents a very masculine way of thinking. Holofernes's plan to sleep with Judith gains relevance not only because of his sexual wishes, but also in order to prove his masculinity to himself and his army. It is not only a matter of personal desire, but also of proving the military and political power of Assyria against its subordinates.

3.2 Emotions of Judith

Turning to Judith's emotions, the description could hardly be more different. Since Holofernes, as he looks forward to spending the night with the beautiful Judith, is highly emotional, he encourages her to adopt a similar attitude: καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτὴν Ολοφέρνης πίε δὴ καὶ γενήθητι μεθ' ἡμῶν εἰς εὐφροσύνην "Now drink, and be merry with us" (Jdt 12:17). The word εὐφροσύνη is ambiguous (cf. Jdt 10:3) but clearly has a sexual undertone in Jdt 12:13, 17: Judith, the only woman in this men's world, is prompted to be merry with them. This euphemistic request indicates the danger that she is in. Although Judith in her answer to Holofernes's request seems to be filled with "delight" (Jdt 12:18), and even drinks (Jdt 12:18, 19), she does not drink of Holofernes's wine, as he intended her to do, but only drinks what her slave had prepared for her (Jdt 12:19 cf. 12:15). Unlike Holofernes, she therefore still has control over the situation.

In the evening, all the other men depart, leaving Judith alone with Holofernes in his tent, drunk and lying in an incapable state on his bed. Holofernes has collapsed forward onto his bed and is covered in wine (καὶ Ολοφέρνης προπεπτωκῶς ἐπὶ τὴν κλίνην αὐτοῦ ἦν γὰρ περικεχυμένος αὐτῷ ὁ οἶνος, Jdt 13:2). By lying in this state on his bed, Holofernes has made himself completely defenceless. At the same time, it explains why Judith later is able to strike twice at his neck (Jdt 13:8). Without any involvement by Judith, Holofernes has made himself defenceless and useless for military purposes. A drunken, sleeping Holofernes, who is covered in spilled wine, is the exact opposite of the picture of an energetic and successful general drawn in the earlier chapters.

To increase the tension of the killing scene in Judith 13, the narrative offers two descriptions of Judith approaching the bed (Jdt 13:4b, 7), both times combined with a prayer. The first prayer is Jdt 13:4–5: "κύριε ὁ θεὸς πάσης δυνάμεως ἐπίβλεψον ἐν τῇ ὥρᾳ ταύτῃ ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν μου εἰς ὑψωμα Ἱερουσαλημ

ᾧτι νῦν καιρὸς ἀντιλαβέσθαι τῆς κληρονομίας σου καὶ ποιῆσαι τὸ ἐπιτήδευμά μου εἰς θραῦσμα ἐχθρῶν οἱ ἐπανέστησαν ἡμῖν “Lord, God of all power, in this hour look upon the works of my hands for the exaltation of Jerusalem, ⁵ for now is the time to defend your inheritance and to accomplish my mission for the wreck of the enemies who rose up against us” (Jdt 13:4–5). Judith speaks “within her heart”, i.e. inwardly (ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ αὐτῆς).

Her first prayer begins with an invocation of God using the appellation “Lord, God of all power” (κύριε ὁ θεὸς πάσης δυνάμεως). In the middle of the Assyrian camp, surrounded by an incredibly powerful army (δύναμις), and alone in the tent of its mightiest “lord” (κύριος), Holofernes, Judith prays to *her* “lord” (κύριος), the God of all power. But she does not request something for herself, but asks God to look (cf. [ἐπι]βλέπω in the prayer Jdt 6:19; 9:9) upon her deed (ἐπὶ τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν μου “upon the works of my hands”). The phrase “works of my hands” (τὰ ἔργα τῶν χειρῶν μου) is found only once in the whole narrative of Judith. Usually she announces her future action by way of the words πρᾶγμα “deed” (Jdt 8:32; 11:6, 16), or ἐπιτήδευμα “mission” (Jdt 10:8; 11:6; 13:5). The readers know it; the time has *now* come, the announced deed is imminent.

That this is not an end in itself is made clear by Judith’s prayer for the exaltation of Jerusalem. “Exaltation” in the narrative of Judith is used only regarding “Jerusalem” (ὑψωμα Ἱερουσαλημ Jdt 10:8; 13:4; 15:9). Judith is not asking to be rescued herself from this dangerous situation, but is focused on Jerusalem, and thereby on the Temple (cf. Jdt 8:21, 24; 9:8, 13).

Now is the right time (καιρὸς) for God to defend his inheritance (ἀντιλαβέσθαι τῆς κληρονομίας σου), i.e. Israel (cf. Isa 19:25; Jdt 9:12). But this defence of his people does not happen by means of a direct *intervention* by God. The conception of the author of Judith differs, like other late narratives of the Old Testament,²³ from the early biblical narratives, such as that of the Exodus, in which God himself takes part, intervenes and acts. Her aim is “the wreck of the enemies” (εἰς θραῦσμα ἐχθρῶν). Judith uses a word that the other leaders used to describe the danger (cf. Jdt 7:9). The verb “to break” (θραύω) is later used for the destruction of the enemies by the hand of Judith (Jdt 9:10; 13:14). The fact that Judith is the killer is not kept secret; she is responsible for killing Holofernes and her responsibility is not attributed to anyone else.

After the first prayer, Judith again approaches the bedpost at the headboard of Holofernes’s bed and she takes down his sword (ἀκινάκης) from it. Instead of striking immediately, Judith draws even closer to the bed, takes hold of his hair and speaks a second, shorter prayer: “Strengthen me, Lord, God of Israel, in this

²³ Schmitz, Gott (forthcoming).

day” (Jdt 13:7), which delays the deed narratively and increases the tension. While grabbing his hair and holding his scimitar, she immediately begins her prayer with the plea: “Strengthen me!” (κραταίωσόν με). She is asking God for the necessary strength, but it is a strength needed for *her* deed (cf. Jdt 9:9, 14).

Strengthened by these two prayers, the killing takes place: καὶ ἐπάταξεν εἰς τὸν τράχηλον αὐτοῦ δις ἐν τῇ ἰσχύι αὐτῆς καὶ ἀφείλεν τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτοῦ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ “and she struck at his neck twice with her strength and took his head from him” (Jdt 13:8).

To sum up:

One does not learn much about the emotions of the protagonist Judith. In the key scene, the killing scene, there are hardly any descriptions of her emotions. The whole event is narrated from an external perspective, leaving the reader without any knowledge of the protagonist’s inner world.

That this is a specific feature of the LXX version is demonstrated by a comparison with the Vulgate version of the book of Judith. Here Jdt 13:6 Vulg. reads: *stetitque Judith ante lectum orans cum lacrimis et labiorum motu in silentio* “And Judith stood before the bed praying with tears, and the motion of her lips in silence”. Whereas the Vulgate adds a deeply emotional involvement to Judith, the LXX describes her without emotions, the only exception being her two prayers. Only by means of these two prayers is the reader able to gain some knowledge of Judith’s inner world.

The first important discovery, then, is that there are no descriptions of Judith’s emotions in the killing scene, with only the two prayers giving access to her inner world. The prayers are the only emotional expression. While the prayers beseech God, requesting the necessary strength for the deed, there is no word of fear, emotion or concern on the part of Judith in this delicate and dangerous situation.

This conveys a mixed picture. Whereas Holofernes is described in a highly emotional situation, no emotions are attributed to Judith. Access to her inner world is only by means of her two prayers. Why are there no descriptions of Judith’s emotions? In the history of the book’s reception, this question led to many speculations, ranging from coldness to frigidity, and to killing with pleasure.²⁴

Why there is no mention of any emotions on the part of the protagonist at the climax of the narrative is an important question. Not only should those passages that specifically describe emotions be the subject of emotional analysis but this should also be done for those passages that *do not* make any mention of

24 Hebbel, *Judith*; Freud, *Tabu*, 211–228; see also Freud, *Sexualität*, 273–292.

emotions. Obviously, this leads to a few methodological difficulties. We have no way of knowing why something was *not* described. But, in the killing scene, there is, firstly, a sharp contrast between the two protagonists and, secondly, a significant difference in a later version of the text. That is why I would repeat my question: Why do we not find any emotions attributed to Judith in the killing scene? From my point of view, there could be several ways of explaining these results:

First: the killing of Holofernes recalls a series of other biblical narratives, in which killings are described. I will mention three of them. The first is the account of the battle between David and Goliath. Like David, Judith kills Holofernes with his own sword. David took the sword of the Philistine Goliath and cut off his head with it (1 Sam 17:51 – Jdt 13:6, 8). The second narrative is the one of Jael and Sisera. The narrative of Judith recalls this narrative in detail, especially the lexeme “to beat/to strike” (πατάσσω), which is found in the killing scene as well, describing how Jael kills Sisera (Judg 5:26). In this narrative a woman from Israel kills the opposing general in a tent by smiting his head and thereby saving Israel (Judg 5:26 – Jdt 13:6, 8). In the third account, the head and arm of the Seleucid general Nikanor were shown after the battle of Adasa in Jerusalem as a sign of victory (1 Macc 7:47 // 2 Macc 15:30). What is interesting is that none of these narratives make any mention of emotions. In other words, the narratives that apparently underlie the killing scene in the book of Judith are devoid of any reported emotions.

Second: another interesting reason for the omission of emotions could be found in the pagan philosophical discussion of the classical and Hellenistic age. Without going too deeply into a discussion about the function of emotions in the different philosophical schools,²⁵ I would note that a text like Plato’s descriptions of Socrates’s death might provide indications: Socrates, as described in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, shows nearly no emotions in the face of certain death, but is distinguished by heroic self-control. Calmly and in self-controlled fashion, he drinks the poison hemlock (*Phaidr.* 116b–117c). He displays total control over his emotions and lives up to the standard that a genuine philosopher should control his emotions and bow to the logos; it is a behaviour free of emotions and the tragic.²⁶ Plato’s Socrates elsewhere demands a control over emotions (*Resp.* 387–388) and calls a person who has such control “*aner epieikes*”. Elsewhere, Socrates concedes some emotion, i.e. grief (*Resp.* 603a), to an “*aner epieikes*”,

²⁵ Cf. Gill, *Stoicism*, 143–166; Gill, *Emotions*, 5–15; Buddensiek, *Stoa*, 71–93; Rapp, *Aristoteles*, 45–68; Price, *Emotions*, 121–142.

²⁶ Cf. Erler, *Platon*, 26–27.

but still demands overall control over these emotions (*Resp.* 387–388).²⁷ Maybe the fact that an “*aner epieikes*” was characterized by absolute control over his emotions and that this was widely appreciated in the Hellenistic world, led to a composition of a killing scene that is devoid of any reference to Judith’s emotions.

Third: seen through the prism of Aaron Ben-Ze’ev’s categories, there may be a third possibility. If change and personal concern are the characteristic triggers of emotions, then these factors are absent in the protagonist Judith. At first sight, this may not seem plausible, considering that the subject is the killing of a person but it may at the same time point to an important aspect of the narrative. For Judith, change and personal concern do not arise from the circumstances in Holofernes’s tent, but from the danger of the city’s surrender. The five-day ultimatum, negotiated by the elders of the city, was the reason for Judith to become involved. The fact that they turned to God and threatened to surrender the city if he did not help them within five days is what makes Judith see the need to make this situation (change) happen. She feels personally and deeply moved, as well as challenged (personal concern), as can be deduced from her speech in Judith 8 (8:12–14). It therefore comes as no surprise that she is characterized as a very emotional person in the argument with the elders in Judith 8 and in her prayer in Judith 9. Here Judith argues with great intensity. By giving higher priority to the rescue of Israel than to the danger of sexual violence that personally threatens her in the Assyrian camp, she accepts a situation of great instability and adopts a partial perspective.

These three considerations, namely, the traditio-historical guidelines of the received biblical texts, the cultural-historical background of a Hellenistic appreciation of unemotional *habitus*, and the narratological treatment of emotions already noted in regard to the theological questions in Judith 8, represent three possible ways of explaining the difference between the emotional Holofernes and the unemotional Judith.

4 Conclusion

Because of the semantical incongruity of the term “emotion”, the analysis of the killing scene in the book of Judith has benefited from Aaron Ben-Ze’ev’s phenomenological description of emotions: Holofernes’s emotions were stirred up by

²⁷ Cf. Erler, Platon, 32.

change and personal concern and characterized by instability, great intensity, a partial perspective and relative brevity. The climax of his emotions is found in the killing scene.

Regarding Judith, the situation is reversed. Unlike the situation regarding Holofernes's emotions, there is no description of her emotions. Only by means of her prayers is the reader able to gain some knowledge about her and her emotions in the killing scene. In this scene, the climax of the built-up tension, there is at the same a highly emotional Holofernes and a wholly unemotional Judith: since Holofernes has already been made "headless" by his own emotions, the unemotional Judith is able to behead the "headless" Holofernes.

Abstract

Starting with a terminological and phenomenological perspective on the question "What is an emotion?", particularly as developed by Aaron Ben Ze'ev, the killing scene in the book of Judith (Jdt 12:10–13:9) is analysed. This crucial scene in the book's plot reports the intense emotions of Holofernes but nothing is said about any emotions on the part of Judith. The only emotional glimpse occurs in Judith's short prayers in the killing scene. The highly emotional Holofernes and the unemotional Judith together reveal that Holofernes is already made "headless" by his own emotions, whereas the unemotional Judith, unencumbered by emotions, is able to behead the "headless" Holofernes.

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