

Job and Niobe, both crying after the loss of their children; Ifigenia and Isaac, both given as the sacrificial victim, and saved only thanks to divine intervention in the last moment, by providing a sacrificial animal to be sacrificed instead. Those are the best-known cases of narrative analogies between ancient Greek and Biblical narratives.

For a long time the existence of the similarities between ancient Greek and Biblical literature have been recognized. In both corpora different literary features alike were highlighted. There are big narratives, as mentioned above, similarities in style and imaginary, usage of the literary genre, e.g. historiography or biographies. However, previous scholarship limited itself to pinpoint such resemblances, without undertaking an adequate attempt to explain how this phenomenon shall be explained.

The aim of the project “The Second Temple Jews - between tradition and the Greek world” is to fill in this gap. Firstly, when one analyses the chronology of the origin of both – Greek and Biblical texts – it appears that the Greek tradition was older. If so, we have to admit that there were Jewish authors who were inspired by the Greek texts. The number of similarities is far too high, and its types too deep, to explain the mutual resemblance as accidental.

The main aim of the project is to study the process of the adoption of the Greek motifs in the Bible, in both the Old and New Testament, and in the Apocrypha. Analysis of the literary content, the subject of the adoption of Greek literature, i.e. establishing which literary forms, and motifs, or detailed narrative features, Jewish writers adopted in the Second Temple period (5th cent. BCE – 1st cent. CE), and study how this process varied in time, will allow us to understand the very process of intercultural relations between Greeks and Jews. This research will address the question where such intercultural contacts were undertaken, and what the language of communication was.

This will shed light on the intellectual profile and characteristics of Jewish elites. We will understand more about these elites by knowing what their attitude was towards the Greek heritage, and how this attitude changed with time. This will allow us to better understanding the process of the creation of biblical literature. We will know more about the people who were responsible for writing, and who were the original audience of the biblical texts. Furthermore, we will know more about the process of intercultural exchange of intellectual values in ancient times.