

**SERVANTS AS ASSISTANTS:
CARRYING OUT THE WILL OF ANOTHER**
Extra-Biblical, Hellenistic Examples
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Agency or instrumentality: one who carries out the will of another, or a task on the behalf of another. In many contexts, the idea is of a subordinate carrying out an assignment of a superior and having the full authority to execute the superior's delegated task (Chapter 3, pp. 52-54).

Jewish Zealots as *Instruments* of the Prophets' Dire Predictions

Every human ordinance was trampled under foot, every dictate of religion ridiculed by these men [the Jewish Zealots], who scoffed at the oracles of the prophets as imposters' fables. Yet those predictions of theirs contained much concerning virtue and vice, by the transgression of which the Zealots brought upon their country the fulfilment of the prophecies directed against it. For there was an ancient saying of inspired men that the city would be taken and the sanctuary burnt to the ground by right of war, whensoever it should be visited by sedition and native hands should be the first to defile God's sacred precincts. This saying the Zealots did not disbelieve; yet they lent themselves as instruments [*diakonous*] of its accomplishment (Josephus, *Jewish War* 4.385–388; Loeb).

Kings Are Ministers of the Will of the Philosophers

In all these cases the kings were not permitted to do or plan anything without the assistance of these wise men, so that in truth it was they who ruled, while the kings became their servants [*hypēretas*] and the ministers [*diakonous*] of their will, though they sat on golden thrones, dwelt in great houses, and feasted sumptuously (Dio Chrysostom, *Discourse* 49.8; Loeb).

2 Kings 1:9–15: *Carrying out the King's Command*

And when this one [a military official] also threatened the prophet that he would seize him by force and take him away if he did not come down willingly, Elijah prayed against him, and a fire destroyed him as it had the officer before him. When the king [Ahaziah] learned also of this man's fate, he sent out a third, but he, being a prudent man and of a very mild disposition, when he came to the place where Elijah was, addressed him in a friendly way; he said that Elijah knew that it was not of his own will but in obedience to the king's command [*de diakonōn protagmati*] that he had come to him, and that those who had been sent before him had come not willingly but for this same reason. He begged him, therefore, to have pity on him and on the soldiers who were with him, and to come down and accompany him to the king. So Elijah, approving of his words and the courtesy of his manner, came down and followed him (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 9.24–25; Loeb).

Agents of God's Punishment

[God] therefore thought right not to couple punishment with His utterances [the ten commandments], though He did not thereby grant immunity to evil-doers, but knew that justice His assessor, the surveyor of human affairs, in virtue of her inborn hatred of evil, will not rest, but take upon herself as her congenital task the punishment of sinners. For it befits the servants and lieutenants of God, that like generals in war-time they should bring vengeance to bear upon deserters who leave the ranks of justice [punish sinful law breakers]. . . . For indeed God is the Prince of Peace while His subalterns [*hypodiakonoi*, subordinates, junior officers] are the leaders in war [agents of God's punishment of law breakers] (Philo, *Decalogue* 177–178; Loeb).

A Subordinate Not *Carrying out* the Mad Order of Caligula to Set a Statue of Himself in the Temple

Furthermore, he [Petronius, an imperial legate] beheld the stubborn determination of the Jews to resist and thought it a terrible thing to bring death upon so many tens of thousands of men in carrying out [*diakonoumenos*] the mad orders of Gaius [Caligula], and to hold them guilty for their reverence to God, and thus to spend the rest of his life in foreboding. He considered it far better to send a letter to Gaius and to endure the latter's inexorable wrath aroused by his not carrying out [*dediakonēmenou*] the orders at once (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.277–278; Loeb).

"I [Petronius] do not, however," he said, "deem it right not to hazard my own safety and position in order to save you, who are so numerous, from perishing. You are carrying out [*diakonoumenōn*] the precepts of your law, which as your heritage you see fit to defend, and serve the sovereign of all, almighty God, whose temple I should not have had the heart to see fall a prey to the insolence of imperial authority" (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.280; Loeb).

***Carried Out* the Work of Desecrating a Temple**

He put to sea laden with his spoils, and was overtaken by a storm, which sank some of his ships with their crews, and cast the others ashore. But all the sacred things the waves brought back safe into the harbours of the Locrians. Wherefore Pyrrhus, perceiving too late the consequences of his impiety, restored them to the temple of Proserpina and sought to propitiate the goddess with numerous sacrifices. As the victims were unpropitious he [Pyrrhus] became still more furious, and put to death all those who had advised the temple-robbing, or had assented to it, or had taken part in it [*diakonēsamenous to ergon*]. Such is the story of Pyrrhus' disaster (*Appian's Roman History*, vol. 1, 3.12.2).

A False Diety Used the Magic Power of Seven Letters as an Instrument (*Diakonos*)

He employed as his instrument, as the Sige of Marcus [a Gnostic heretic] declares, the power of seven letters, in order that the fruit of the independent will [of Achamoth] might be revealed (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.14.7, ANF).

Elisha's Servant Comes to Warn Him

"Accordingly, Adados sent to that city a great force with horses and chariots in order to take Elisha. These surrounded the whole city by night and kept it under guard. And when, at break of dawn, the prophet's servant [*prophētou diakonos*] learned of this and that the enemy were seeking to take Elisha, he came running to him with cries of alarm and informed him of these things." (Josephus, *Antiquities* 9, 54; Loeb)

One Woman Implementing a Foolish Plan Contrived by Another Woman

"There was an upper room in our house occupied by Philoneos, a highly respected friend of our father's, during his visits to Athens. Now Philoneos had a mistress [concubine] whom he proposed to place in a brothel. My brother's mother [Clytaemnestra] made friends with her; and on hearing of the wrong intended by Philoneos, she sends for her, informing her on her arrival that she herself [Clytaemnestra] was also being wronged by our father. If the other would do as she was told, she said, she herself [Clytaemnestra] knew how to restore Philoneos' love for her [the concubine] and our father's for herself. She [Clytaemnestra] had discovered the means; the [mistress's] task was to carry out [*diakonēsai*] her orders. She asked if she was prepared to follow her instructions, and, I imagine, received a ready assent" (Antiphon, *Orations: Prosecution of the Stepmother for Poisoning*, 1.15–16).

"So Philoneos thought it would be an excellent idea to make one journey of it by seeing my father as far as Peiraeus, offering the sacrifice, and entertaining his friend. Philoneos' mistress accompanied him to attend the sacrifice. On reaching Peiraeus, Philoneos of course carried out the ceremony. When the sacrifice was over, the

woman considered how to administer the draught [drug]: should she give it before or after supper? Upon reflection, she decided that it would be better to give it afterwards, thereby carrying out [*diakonousan*] the suggestion of this Clytaemnestra here" (1.17–18).

"Thinking it a happy inspiration, she gave Philoneos the larger draught; she imagined perhaps that if she gave him more, Philoneos would love her the more: for only when the mischief was done did she see that my stepmother [Clytaemnestra] had tricked her. She gave our father a smaller draught. So they poured their libation, and, grasping their own slayer, drained their last drink on earth. Philoneos expired instantly; and my father was seized with an illness which resulted in his death twenty days later. In atonement, the subordinate [*mistress*] who carried out [*diakonēsasa*] the deed has been punished as she deserved, although the crime in no sense originated from her" (1.20–21).

Plato's View on the Division of Labor

Different kinds of men take care of different kinds of service necessary to the working of the city.

"If our servitor goes forth" [*kenos an iē ho diakonos*]

"other ministrants" [*tōn allōn diakonōn*] who were to import and export merchandise.

Men who see this need and appoint themselves "for this service" [*epi tēn diakonian*]

(Plato, *Republic*, 370–371)