

## Hellenistic royal inscriptions

### Ptolemy I (311 BCE)

#### THE SATRAP STELA (CAIRO JDE 22182)

(translation by R.K. Ritner)

**I**n November 311 B.C., while Egypt was officially ruled by Alexander the Great's infant son (Alexander II of Egypt, IV of Macedon), real authority was exercised by the satrap Ptolemy (I), former general and founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty that would rule until the suicide of Cleopatra the Great. After victories in 312/11 secured the extension of Ptolemy's control into Syria-Palestine, the ambitious satrap celebrated a thanksgiving festival that culminated in a royal donation decree to the native gods of Pe and Dep, precincts of the sacred city of Buto. The text of this donation, known as the Satrap Stela, maintains the fiction of Alexander's kingship, while according Ptolemy unprecedented praise, even adapting the narrative "Königsnovelle" format. The text preserves the most extensive information concerning the brief reign of Khababash between the Persian occupations and typifies late ideology of kingship, with dire consequences for rulers who abandon divine law.<sup>1</sup>

Within the quoted dialogue, references to "His Majesty" are ambiguous, referring either to the yet uncrowned Ptolemy, as assumed by the first editor, Brugsch, or to Khababash, as suggested by Wilcken and followed by subsequent translators. While Ptolemy certainly uses nonroyal expressions for himself, it is less certain that the priesthood would hesitate to flatter the *de facto* ruler with

1. See Ritner, "Khababash and the Satrap Stela—A Grammatical Rejoinder," *ZÄS* 107 (1980): 136–37.

*the titles of "Sovereign" and "Majesty." Ambiguity is perhaps intentional, for in the upper lunette, a king in traditional royal regalia, but with blank cartouches, offers land and products in flanking scenes to Horus and Edjo, local deities of Buto and patrons of kingship.*

R.K.R.

1 Regnal year 7, first month of Inundation season, under the Majesty of the Horus: "The youthful one, great of strength"; The Two Ladies: "The beloved of the gods, to whom was given the office of his father"; The Horus of Gold: "The ruler in the entire land"; the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands, Haaibre-Setepenamon,<sup>2</sup> the Son of Re, Alexander (II), living forever, beloved of the gods of Pe and Dep. He is king in the Two Lands and the foreign countries. His Majesty is in the midst of the Asiatics, while a great Prince is in Egypt, whose name is Ptolemy.

He is a youthful man, strong in his two arms, effective in plans, with mighty armies, stout hearted, firm footed, who attacks the powerful without turning his back, who strikes the face of his opponents when they fight, with precise hand, who grasps to himself the bow without shooting astray, who fights with his sword in the midst of battle, with none who can stand in his vicinity, a champion whose arms are not repulsed, with no reversal of what issues from his mouth, who has no equal in the Two Lands or the foreign countries.

As he brought back the sacred images of the gods which were found within Asia, together with all the ritual implements and all the sacred scrolls of the temples of Upper and Lower Egypt, so he restored them in their proper places. As he made his residence, named the Fortress of the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Merikaamon-Setepenre,<sup>3</sup> the Son of Re, Alexander, whose former name was Rakotis, on the shore of the great green sea of the Greeks, so he assembled many Greeks with / their horses and many ships with their troops. He then went with his armies to the land of the Syrians, with the result that they fought with him and he entered among them with his heart strong like a raptor in pursuit of small birds, seizing them in a single instant. To Egypt he brought away their princes, their horses, their ships, and all their wonders.

Afterward, he made an expedition to the territory of Irem,<sup>4</sup> seizing

2. "The heart of Re rejoices, Chosen of Amon."

3. "Beloved of the *ka*-spirit of Amon, Chosen of Re."

4. Beginning with Brugsch in 1871, the place name has been read *Mr-mr-ti* and identified with Marmarica because of a known campaign by Ptolemy against the Libyan

them in a single moment. In retaliation for what they had done against Egypt, he brought away their people, both male and female, together with their gods. He then returned to Egypt with his heart happy at these things that he had done.

As he was celebrating a holiday, so this great Prince was seeking benefactions for the gods of Upper and Lower Egypt, with the result that those who were beside him together with the grandees of Lower Egypt said to him:

“The northern marshland, whose name is The Land of Edjo, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt Senenenptah-setepentenen,<sup>5</sup> the Son of Re, Khababash, living forever, gave it to the gods of Pe and Dep after His Majesty proceeded to Pe and Dep, making a circuit of the marshland that is in its entire territory, going into the interior of the swamps and examining each Nile branch that goes to the sea, in order to repel the ships of Asia from Egypt.”

Then His Majesty<sup>6</sup> said to those who were beside him: “This marshland, inform me (about it)!,” so that they said before His Majesty: “The northern marshland, whose name is The Land of Edjo, it formerly belonged to the gods of Pe and Dep, before the enemy Xerxes revoked it. He did not make offerings from it to the gods of Pe and Dep.”

Then His Majesty said: “Let the priests and high dignitaries of Pe and

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Cyrenaica (Sethe, 15; Bouché-Leclercq, 106, n. 2; Mahaffy, 39; Bevan, 30). As recognized by *Wb.I/116*, however, the spelling corresponds to the Nubian site of Irem, attested from the New Kingdom and localized in the Sudanese Butana near Shendi by David O'Connor, “The Location of Irem,” *JEA* 73 (1987): 99–136. This location corresponds to the site of Meroe in Ptolemaic times, so Ptolemy’s campaign was against “Meroitic territory” in its broadest sense, most probably in Lower Nubia. See further P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (Oxford, 1972), vol. 2, 12, n. 28.

5. “The image of Ptah, Chosen of (Ptah)-Tenen.”

6. Here punctuated, with some hesitation, as Ptolemy. Wilcken’s suggestion of Khababash requires that the king’s questioning of “those who were beside him” in l.8 cannot be the logical response to the statement of “those who were beside him” in the preceding line. The priests’ historical narration (of Khababash’s conversation) would continue from ll. 7 to 12, with an abrupt and unmarked change of address from Khababash to Ptolemy in l. 12, and no mention of how Khababash’s donation after Xerxes was reversed. With the Brugsch interpretation, conversation alternates between the king and his courtiers, Khababash is noted as the initial donor, Xerxes the subsequent disturber, and Ptolemy the restorer, who alone can be said to have given the land “a second time” (l. 12).

Dep be brought!,” so that they were brought to him in haste. Then His Majesty said: “Inform me of the wrath of the gods of Pe and Dep, how  
 10 they dealt with the enemy / because of the evil deed that he had done! Behold, they say that the enemy Xerxes did an evil deed against Pe and Dep, having seized its property,” so that they said before His Majesty:

“Sovereign, our lord! Horus the son of Isis, the son of Osiris, ruler of rulers, the ideal Upper Egyptian King, the ideal Lower Egyptian King, the protector of his father, the Lord of Pe, the foremost of the gods who came into existence afterward, after whom there is no king, expelled the enemy Xerxes<sup>7</sup> from his (Egyptian) palace together with his eldest son; thus it is perceived in Sais of Neith today beside the God’s Mother.”

Then His Majesty said: “This god, champion among the gods, after whom there is no king, let me be placed upon the path of His Majesty on which a King lives!”<sup>8</sup>

Then the priests and high dignitaries of Pe and Dep said: “Let Your Majesty command to give back the northern marshland, whose name is The Land of Edjo, to the gods of Pe and Dep, including its bread, beer, oxen, fowl and every good thing.<sup>9</sup> Let its renewal be heralded in your name regarding its donation to the gods of Pe and Dep a second time in exchange for making your deeds successful.”<sup>10</sup>

Then this great Prince said: “Let a written command be made at the record office of the royal accounting scribe saying:

‘(By order of) Ptolemy the Satrap. The Land of Edjo, I shall give it to

7. For Artaxerxes, as noted by Spiegelberg, 1907, 5–6. The notary of a Demotic document of year 1 of Khababash also notarized a document of year 9 of Alexander the Great (324 B.C.), so that the reign of Khababash could precede that of Artaxerxes (342–339), but not that of Xerxes (486–465). Briant, 1044, has suggested that Egyptians used Xerxes as a generic name.

8. Or, “Let me be placed upon the path of His Majesty so that I might live on it.” “His Majesty” here refers to Horus as true king. For the common notion of a personal “path of life,” cf. The Eloquent Peasant, Papyrus Insinger, and the discussion in Ritner, “Khababash and the Satrap Stela—A Grammatical Rejoinder,” *ZÄS* 107 (1980): 136–37.

9. The land is given primarily for its produce, the source of income for the temple. Thus, in the lunette scene, the offering of land is balanced by an offering of the derived produce. Wilcken’s interpretation makes this the conclusion of the narration, with the following mention of “your name” addressed to Ptolemy.

10. Ptolemy’s successful military invasion is here credited to the intervention of the gods.

Horus, the protector of his father, Lord of Pe, and to Edjo, Lady of Pe and Dep, from today forever, together with all its towns, all its villages, all its inhabitants, all its acreage, all its water, all its cattle, all its flocks, all its herds<sup>11</sup> and everything that derives from it and which has been part of it previously, together with whatever is added to it, together with the donation made by the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands, Khababash, living forever,

- 15        its south: the district of the town of Buto / and northern Hermopolis  
           up to the doors of Nilopolis,  
           north: the dunes<sup>12</sup> at the shore of the sea,  
           west: the doors of the canal<sup>13</sup> of the rudder [...] divine waters to the  
           dunes,  
           east: the district of Sebennytos.

Its short-horned cattle shall be destined for the great sacred falcons, its long-horned cattle for the dromos of the Lady of the Two Lands, its oxen for the living falcons, its milk for the noble child, its birds for the one residing in Khemmis,<sup>14</sup> who lives on blood, with everything that derives from its arable land being on the offering table of Horus himself, the Lord of Pe, and Edjo, the serpent who is on the brow of Re-Horachty, forever.

All of this the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Lord of the Two Lands, Senenenptah-setepentenen, the Son of Re, Khababash, living forever, donated to the gods of Pe and Dep forever, and this great ruler of Egypt, Ptolemy, has renewed the donations to the gods of Pe and Dep forever, with the reward for this that he has done being the giving to him of valor and victory in happiness, while fear of him pervades the foreign lands to their full extent.<sup>15</sup>

11. Further specified by hieroglyphic determinatives of cattle, ram, ibex, pig, and donkey.

12. Lit. "ground" *Wb.* III, 423.

13. *Wb.* III, 332/5.

14. Carved as "Inundation season," probably a Ptolemaic substitution of one swamp hieroglyph for another (cf. *Wb.* I, 13/2–4). The resident of Khemmis is Horus, whose sacred animal the falcon does live on the blood of small birds, cf. the royal encomium in line 5 of this text.

15. The phraseology parallels the conclusion of traditional royal donation texts; cf. Kawa stelae 3, 4, and 8 in M. F. Laming Macadam, *The Temples of Kawa*, vol. 1 (London, 1949). For the final curses, a feature common to both royal and private

The Land of Edjo, the one who will inventory<sup>16</sup> it or who will disturb it so as to seize property from it, he is in the bonds of Those who are in Pe; he is in the fury of Those who are in Dep, while he shall be in the fiery blast of the goddess Weptawi on the day of her raging. Neither his son nor daughter will give him water.’ ”

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donations, see H. Sottas, *La préservation de la propriété funéraire dans l'ancienne Égypte* (Paris, 1913), 136–38.

16. For the term, see Ritner, *CdE* 63, no. 126, (1989): 279–80, contra E. Bresciani, “Registraziane catastale . . .,” *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 6 (1983): 28 (l. 14).

## Ptolemy III (246-222 BCE)

**99 The Adulis Inscription of Ptolemaios III. 246–222.** An inscription originally set up in Adulis, modern Massawa, on the Red Sea coast of Ethiopia and preserved in a copy made by the sixth-century AD traveler Cosmas Indicopleustes (*Christian Topography* 2.58–9). Line divisions are conventional only.

\*OGIS 54; Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Topographie chrétienne*, ed. W. Wolska-Conus (Paris 1968) 1.364–86; cf. Appian, *Syriaca* 65, Justin 27.1.9 and Porphyry, *FGrHist* 160F43.

Bevan, *Seleucus* 1.181–90; Bevan, *Ptolemy* 192–3; Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* 2.344 n. 106; H. H. Scullard, *The Elephant in the Greek and Roman World* (London 1974) 126–37; Will, *Histoire* 1<sup>2</sup>.250–4.

The great king, Ptolemaios (III), son of King Ptolemaios | and of Queen  
Arsinoe,<sup>1</sup> the gods Adelphoi, the children of King | Ptolemaios and of  
Queen Berenike,<sup>2</sup> the gods Soteres, | descended through his father  
5 from Herakles, the son of Zeus, and through his mo||ther from  
Dionysos, the son of Zeus,<sup>3</sup> having inherited from his father | dominion  
over Egypt and Libya and Syria | and Phoinikia and Kypros and Lykia  
and Karia and the | Cycladic Islands,<sup>4</sup> he marched out into Asia<sup>5</sup> with |

10 infantry and cavalry forces and a fleet || and elephants – Troglodytic<sup>6</sup>  
 and Aithiopian<sup>7</sup> – which his father | and he first hunted in these  
 countries, | and, having brought them back to Egypt, trained for |  
 military use.<sup>8</sup> And having become master of all the countries on this  
 side of the Euphrates | and of Kilikia and of Pamphylia and of Ionia and  
 15 of the Hel||espont and of Thrace and of all forces in these countries |  
 and of Indian elephants; and having made the rulers in | these places  
 all subjects, he crossed the Euphrates | River; and, after having made  
 Mesopotamia and Babylonia and Sousi|ana and Persis and Media and  
 20 all the rest as far as || Baktriana his subjects;<sup>9</sup> and after having sought  
 out all | the sacred objects which had been taken from Egypt by the  
 Persians and return|ed (them) together with the other treasures from  
 these places to E|gypt,<sup>10</sup> he sent his forces through the can|als [---].<sup>11</sup>

- 1 Actually he was the son of Ptolemaios II (285–246) by his first wife, Arsinoe I, and was later adopted by Arsinoe II at the instigation of his father (cf. scholion on Theocritus 17, line 128).
- 2 Ptolemaios I (305–282) and Berenike I.
- 3 Not quite correct since both Ptolemaios II and Arsinoe II claimed descent from Hylas, the son of Herakles, the son of Zeus and Deianeira, the daughter of Dionysos (cf. Satyros, *FGrHist* 631F1 = Theophilus *Ad Autol.* 2.7 for the genealogy of Ptolemaios IV).
- 4 Cf. Theocritus 17, lines 85–92.
- 5 In 246 at the beginning of the Third Syrian War (246–241); cf. no. 98.
- 6 Manuscript reading. The correct form is Trogodytic.
- 7 Elephants from Trogodytike, the coastal regions of the Red Sea, and Aithiopia, the interior of the Sudan.
- 8 Cf. Diodorus 3.18.4 and 40–1, Strabo 16.4.14, C 773–4.
- 9 Appian says he advanced as far as Babylon. According to Porphyry he appointed two governors, Antiochos, one of his friends, for Kilikia, and Xanthippos for the Trans-Euphrates areas.
- 10 Porphyry says that he brought back 40,000 talents of silver and 2500 sacred vessels and divine images that had been looted from Egypt by Kambyzes.
- 11 Justin and Porphyry attribute his return to a revolt in Egypt. His route is disputed. If the canals are those of Babylonia, he returned by sea around Arabia; if they are those of the Nile, then he returned the same way he had come.

Source: Stanley M. Burstein, *The Hellenistic Age from the Battle of Ipsos to the Death of Kleopatra VII* (Cambridge, UK: CUP, 1985).



## **Antiochus I king of Commagene (50-35 BCE)**

### THE INSCRIPTION OF KING ANTIOCHUS I OF COMMAGENE

*Dittenberger, OGIS, 383; O. Puchstein, Reisen in Kleinasien und Nordsyrien (1890), pp. 259 ff.; Michel, Recueil, 736. This inscription, set up probably between 50 and 35 B.C., was discovered in 1881 on the high mountain of Nimrud-Dagh, in the Taurus range, within the borders of ancient Commagene. Compare Fritz Krüger, Orient und Hellas in den Denkmälern und Inschriften des Königs Antiochos I von Kommagene, "Greifswalder Beiträge zur Literatur und Stilforschung," No. 19 (Greifswald, 1937).*

Source: F.C. Grant, *Hellenistic Religions: The Age of Syncretism* (Indianapolis IA: Bobbs-Merrill, 1953).

The Great King Antiochus, the God, the Righteous One, the Manifest [Deity], the Friend of the Romans and the Friend of the Greeks, the Son of King Mithradates the Victorious and of Laodice the Brother-loving Goddess, the Daughter of King Antiochus Epiphanes, the Mother-loving, the Victorious, has recorded for all time, on consecrated pedestals, [and] with inviolable letters, the deeds of his clemency.

I have come to the conclusion that, for mankind, of all good things piety is both the most secure possession and also the sweetest enjoyment. This conviction became, for me, the cause of fortunate power and its blessed use; and during my whole life I have appeared to all men as one who thought holiness to be the true guardian and the incomparable happiness of my reign. By this means I have, contrary to all expectations, escaped great perils, have easily become master of hopeless situations, and in a blessed way have attained to the fullness of a long life.

After taking over my father's dominion, I announced, in the piety of my mind, that the kingdom subject to my throne should be the common dwelling place of all the gods, in that by means of every kind of art I decorated the representations of their form, as the ancient lore of Persians and of Greeks (the fortunate roots of my ancestry!) had handed them down [to us], and honored them with sacrifices and festivals—as was the primitive rule and the common custom of all mankind; in addition to which I have myself, in my upright intention, thought up still other and especially brilliant honors. And as I have decided to lay the foundation of this tomb—which is to be indestructible by the ravages of time, in closest proximity to the heavenly throne, wherein the fortunately preserved outer form of my person, preserved to ripe old age, shall, after the soul beloved by God has been sent to the heavenly thrones of Zeus Oromasdes, rest through immeasurable time—so I undertook to make this holy place a common throne room of all the gods; so that not only the heroic company of my ancestors, whom you behold before you, might be set up here by my pious devotion, but also that the divine representation of the manifest deities [*daimones*] might be consecrated on the holy hill and that this place might likewise not be lacking in witness to my piety.

Therefore, as you see, I have set up these divine images of Zeus-Oromasdes and of Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes and of Artagnes-Heracles-Ares, and also of my all-nourishing homeland Commagene; and from the same stone, throned likewise among the gracious daemons, I have consecrated the features of my own form, and thus admitted a new Tyche [Fortune] to a share in the ancient honors of the great gods, since I thereby, in an upright way, imitated the example of the divine Providence [Phrontis], which as a benevolent helper has so often been seen standing by my side in the struggles of my reign.

Adequate property in land and an inalienable income therefrom have I set aside for the ample provision of sacrifices; an unceasing cultus and chosen priests arrayed in such vestments as are proper to the race of the Persians have I inaugurated, and I have dedicated the whole array and cultus in a manner worthy of my fortune and the majesty of the gods. I have decreed the appropriate laws to govern the sacred observances thus established for everlasting, so that all the inhabitants of my realm may offer both the ancient sacrifices, required by age-old common custom, and also new festivals in honor of the gods and in my honor. The birthday of my natural body, the sixteenth of Audnaios, and the tenth of Loos, the day of my accession to the throne, I have consecrated to the manifestation of the great deities, who were my leaders in a good beginning and have been the source of universal blessings for my whole kingdom. Because of the multitude of offerings and the magnificence of the celebration I have consecrated two additional days, and each of them indeed as an annual festival. The population of my empire I have divided up for the purpose of these assemblies, festival gatherings, and [common] sacrifices, and directed them to repair by villages and cities to the nearest sanctuaries, whichever is most conveniently located for the festival observance. Moreover, I have appointed under the same title that, in addition to the observance just named, my birth on the sixteenth and my accession on the tenth shall be observed every month by the priests.

Now that these regulations have been established, to be observed continually as the pious duty of men of understanding,

not only in my honor but also in the blessed hope of their own good fortune, I have, in obedience to the inspiration of the gods, ordered to be inscribed upon sacred, inviolable stelae a holy law, which shall be binding upon all generations of mankind who in the immeasurable course of time, through their special lot in life, shall successively be destined to dwell in this land; they must observe it without violation, knowing that the stern penalty of the royal daemons will pursue equally the impiety occasioned by neglect as that occasioned by folly, and that disregard [even] of the law decreed for the honor of the heroes brings with it inexorable penalties. For the pious it is all a simple matter, but godlessness is followed by back-breaking burdens. This law my voice has proclaimed, but it is the mind of the gods that has given it authority.

### *The Law*

The priest who is appointed by me for these gods and heroes, whom I have dedicated at the monumental tomb of my [mortal] body, [here] on the topmost ridge of the Taurus range, and [or] who shall at a later time hold this office, he, set free from every other duty, shall without let or hindrance and with no excuse for evasion keep watch at this memorial and devote himself to the care of these images and their proper adornment. On the birthdays which I have established forever as monthly and annual festivals of the gods and of my own person, throughout the whole year he shall, himself decently garbed in Persian raiment, as my dedication and the ancestral custom of our race have provided, crown them all with the gold crowns which I have dedicated as the sacred honors due the daemons; and out of the income from the villages, which I have designated for the sacred honors of the heroic nature [i.e., in addition to daemons and gods], he shall offer on these altars rich additional offerings of incense and aromatic herbs, and also splendid sacrifices in honor of the gods and in my honor, in worthy [and appropriate] wise. Holy tables he must set up with appropriate foods and fill jars from the wine-press with precious mixed drink [i.e., wine and water], and he

shall hospitably welcome the whole of the assembled people, both the natives and the foreigners who stream hither, and he shall provide for the common enjoyment of the feast by the assembled multitudes, in that, as is the custom, he shall take for himself a portion, as a gift in honor of the priestly office, and then distribute the rest of my benefaction to the others for their free enjoyment, so that during the holy days everyone may receive a never-failing sustenance and may thus be able to celebrate the festival without running the risk of malicious calumny, whatever he chooses to take. The drinking cups, which I have dedicated, are to be used by them as long as they remain in the holy place and participate in the general assembly for the feast. The group of musicians whom I have chosen for the purpose and those who may later be consecrated to the same office, their sons and daughters, and also their descendants [in turn] shall all learn the same art and be set free from the burden of every other responsibility; and they are to remain present throughout the observances which I have established, to the [very] end, and without any evasion [or excuse] are to continue their services as long as the assembly requests it. No one, no king or ruler, no priest or official shall ever make slaves of these *hierodules*, whom I have, in accordance with the divine will, consecrated to the gods and to my own honor, or their children or the descendants of their children, who carry on their family to all later time; he shall not enslave them, either to himself or to anyone else, nor alienate them, nor injure one of them, nor deprive him of this ministry; but the priests shall take care of them, and the kings, officials, and all private persons shall stand by them, since the favor of the gods and heroes will be laid up [as a reward] for their piety. Similarly it is not permitted, by divine law, for anyone to appropriate or to alienate the villages which I have dedicated to these gods, to sell them or to devote them to some other purpose, or in any way to injure those villages; or to reduce the income from them, which I have dedicated to the gods as an inalienable possession. Nor, in accordance with our honor, shall anyone go unpunished who shall devise in his mind some other scheme of violence or of reducing or suspending the sacrifices and festal

assemblies which I have established. Whoever shall presume to rescind or to injure or sophistically to interpret the sacred force of this regulation or the heroic honors which the [i.e., this] immortal decree has sanctioned, him the wrath of the daemons and of all the gods shall pursue, both himself and his descendants, irreconcilably, and with every kind of punishment.

[Since] a noble example of piety, a testimony to gods and ancestors, is a matter of sacred duty, I have set [one] before the eyes of my children and grandchildren, as in many others, so in this work; and I believe that they will emulate this beautiful example by continually increasing the honors appropriate to their line and, like me, in their riper years adding greatly to their personal fame. For those who do so I pray that all the ancestral gods, from Persia and Macedonia and from the native land of Comagene, may continue to be gracious to them in all clemency. And whoever, in the long time to come, takes over this reign as king or dynast, he also shall, if he observes this law and guards my honor, enjoy, through my intercession, the favor of the daemons and all the gods. But whoever, in his folly of mind, undertakes measures contrary to the honor of the gods, he shall, even apart from my curse, suffer the full animosity of the gods.