

## A GREEK PLAY ON WORDS IN THE MISHNA?

ואל תאמר לכשאפנה אשנה שמא לא תפנה (אבות ב, ד)

One of the most famous sayings attributed to Hillel in Tractate Avoth 2.4 reads: “And say not ‘When I have leisure I will study’ — perchance thou wilt have no leisure” (transl. Philip Blackman, *Mishnayoth*, N.Y., (Judaica Press, 1963).

This maxim seems be based on the double meaning of σχολή (and σχολάζω) as both “leisure” (and “have leisure”) and “study”. Hillel may have alluded to a *paroimia* now lost; or used the ambiguity inherent in the Greek in order to point out to those aware of it the difference in kind between (the intellectual pastime of) profane studies on the one hand and the (ever-binding) Holy Study of the Law on the other.

THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

RAANANA MERIDOR