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of the iliad nd don't
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Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

October 4, Achilles and His Principles of Fairness and Courage in Homer's "Iliad" When a king desires to be always obeyed, while a follower disobeys him in public, a battle of wills follows. In Homer's "Iliad," Book I, Achilles and Agamemnon go through a heated debate on the right thing to do to stop Apollo's rage. Agamemnon gets back at Achilles for disrespecting him by taking his prize, Briseis, which angers the latter because he does not even want to take any chieftain's prize, yet he loses his. Achilles thinks that Agamemnon exhibits weak leadership with his selfish decisions, while Agamemnon wants to punish Achilles for publicly contradicting his wishes which is against Greek culture. I choose the side of Achilles because his principles of fairness and courage are admirable for a leader who wants to save his troops from pestilence without taking away their "prizes" and who has the courage to be a good leader, while Agamemnon uses persistence and authority for his own welfare only.

Agamemnon stands for persistence and authority, but mostly for his own sake. Persistence can be a good principle for a king, but not if he sacrifices the happiness of his people for his own. Nestor, a long-time warrior, asks Agamemnon to set aside his needs and anger for the good of the Achaians: "Son of Atreus, check your anger, I implore you; end this quarrel with Achilles, who in the day of battle is a tower of strength to the Achaians" (Homer). Agamemnon, however, in his persistence, does not back down. He tells Nestor: "...this fellow must needs become our lord and master: he must be lord of all, king of all, and captain of all, and this shall hardly be" (Homer). He believes that, as King, he is right and must be followed at all times. He follows Greek culture which places higher social status on kings than

warriors. He wants Achilles to respect and obey him because Greek cultural beliefs dictate utmost deference to the king. Furthermore, Agamemnon protects his authority. Losing Chryseis, he asserts his kingship when he demands for Achilles to give Briseis to him: "...I shall come to your tent and take your own prize Briseis, that you may learn how much stronger I am than you are, and that another may fear to set himself up as equal or comparable with me" (Homer). He emphasizes his authority that cannot be undercut at all times. Agamemnon promotes his power with persistence.

Achilles responds to Agamemnon with fairness and courage that are admirable for a leader. Achilles shows fairness because he does not think Agamemnon is being fair in wanting to take the prize of others. He tells the king: " Those we took from the cities have been awarded; we cannot disallow the awards that have been made already" (Homer). Achilles shows admirable fairness to his soldiers and he cannot imagine their loss because of Agamemnon's selfishness. He only wants the plague to end because he pities his men who are suffering and dying from disease. Furthermore, Achilles has courage because he stands up to a tyrant king. He tells Agamemnon: " I should be a mean coward...were I to give in to you in all things. Order other people about, not me, for I shall obey no longer" (Homer). Achilles does not want to obey a selfish king anymore, especially one whom he does not admire and respect. He has more honor than Agamemnon who is like a child who wants to steal another kid's candy just because he can and because he is jealous of the latter. Achilles does what is best for his people, and for that, he is a great, admirable leader, better than the egotistical Agamemnon.

Agamemnon believes in persistence and authority, whereas Achilles holds the principles of fairness and courage, and the latter is better than the former because he does not decide for his welfare but for his people. Agamemnon is shameful for being envious of Achilles and his prize. He is a king and he should rule with his head and heart, not his covetousness and self-centeredness. Nonetheless, as a king, he gets what he wants. Achilles sticks with his plans of leaving the Achaians to teach Agamemnon a hard lesson. He shows what it means to be fair and courageous to a king who serves himself first and foremost.

Work Cited

Homer. Iliad. Project Gutenberg. Web. 28 Sept. 2014. .