

THE GREEK ALTAR IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND INTER-TESTAMENTAL PERIODS

W. HAROLD MARE

Professor of New Testament Language and Literature
Covenant Theological Seminary

In Acts 17:23 is to be found the only use in the New Testament of the word, bōmos, that common Greek term used in the religious world of the New Testament and earlier times for the high built altar of burnt offering upon which heathen sacrifices were performed. The bōmos in Acts 17 is an altar of the Greeks at Athens.

In the discussion of Acts 17:23, commentaries on Acts generally have little or nothing to say about the scarce use of bōmos in the New Testament, although sometimes¹ they give information about the existence of pagan altars dedicated to unknown gods. In connection with the concept of altar in general, the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament by Kittel discusses thusiastērion at length but has little to say about bōmos.²

What is the background of, and evidence for, the usage of bōmos in relationship to thusiastērion? An analysis of the single occurrence of the word, bōmos, in the New Testament in comparison with the usage of the word in earlier Greek literature of the Old Testament and in the Apocryphal books of I and II Maccabees and Sirach,³ as well as in selective, contemporary Greek literature of the Jewish writers, Philo and Josephus, and in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers in the period subsequent to the New Testament, is the subject of this study.

BŌMOS IN THE SEPTUAGINT TRANSLATION OF THE HEBREW OLD TESTAMENT

It is to be observed that there are many references in the New Testament to two kinds of Jewish altars, the altar of burnt offering located outside the tabernacle or temple and the incense altar situated inside the sacred sanctuary, both of which are exclusively designated by thusiastērion, never by bōmos. What is the reason for this selectivity? An historical glance back into the inter-testamental period will give light as to the viewpoint and resultant usage of the New Testament in regard to this important religious concept of altar.

In the Septuagint, where some distinctions can be observed as to the use of words for altar, the basic terms to be observed are the Hebrew mizbeah and bamah and the Greek bōmos and thusiastērion.

In consideration of the usage of bōmos and bamah, etymological theories⁴ as to whether the two words are linguistically connected or not will not help in accounting for the fact that the Septuagint uses bōmos to translate bamah inasmuch as the Greek translation of the Old Testament: (1) also uses bōmos to translate mizbeaḥ; and (2) seems to use bōmos more strictly for heathen altars or those perverted altars of Israel than does the Hebrew Old Testament in its use of bamah.⁵

In the Septuagint, generally speaking, bōmos, when it is a translation for mizbeaḥ, refers to pagan altars, such as those of the Amorites, Hittites, etc. (Ex. 34:13; Deut. 7:5, and 12:3), those of Balak and Balaam (Num. 23:1, 2, 4, 14, 29, 30) and the altars of Baal (Jer. 11:13). There is an interesting variation in Joshua 22:10-34 where bōmos is used, not for a pagan altar, but for one built by the two and one-half tribes at the Jordan and which Israel thought to be perverted. Although the Hebrew throughout this section uses mizbeaḥ for altar, the Septuagint, when the context is speaking of the altar of the Lord, uses thusiastērion (Josh. 22:19, 28, 29); but, when the statements clearly refer to what Israel thought was a perverted or schismatic altar, it uses bōmos (Josh. 22:10, 11, 16, 23, 26, 34). Evidently the Septuagint, in the light of a Hellenistic culture, felt more strongly than the Hebrew in its earlier setting the need for distinguishing, by use of terms, the true altar of the Lord from that of a counterfeit.

In the Septuagint there are only seven examples of bōmos being used as a translation for bamah, all of which are references to pagan places of worship, whether of those locations at which heathen themselves worshipped (as Moab, LXX Jer. 31:35 [Heb. Jer. 48:35]; Isa. 15:2, 16:12) or where apostate Israel falsely worshipped (the high places of Aven, Hosea 10:8; and those of Baal or Tophet in the valley of the son of Hinnom (Jer. 7:31, 32; LXX Jer. 39:35 [Heb. Jer. 32:35]). The expression in the seventh instance is peculiar, the patriarch Isaac being associated with pagan worship by the phrase, "the bōmoi of Isaac" (Amos 7:9). Here the people of God with whom the Lord had made covenant are connected directly in terminology with the false worship of pagan bōmoi.

The Septuagint uses another main Greek word for altar, thusiastērion in single instances for maṣṣebah (standing stone, Hosea 3:4), maḏbaḥ (Biblical Aramaic in Ezra 7:17; LXX II Es. 7:17), bamah (the high places of II Chron. 14:4 [5]), and once possibly for najaḥ (Ps. 82[83]:12),⁶ but often for mizbeaḥ in which numbers of times the true altars of the Lord are indicated (as, Gen. 8:20; 12:7; Exod. 17:15; Lev. 1:5; Josh. 9:27; Judges 6:24; I Sam. 2:33; I Kings 1:50; II Kings 23:9; Ps. 25 [26]:6, etc.), while in some cases thusiastērion is used for pagan altars (such as, the altars of Baal, Judges 6:25, 28, 30; I Kings 16:32; 18:26; II Kings 11:18; II Chron. 23:17; 33:3; 34:4; and the altar at Bethel beside which Jereboam stood, I Kings 13:1). II Chronicles 14:3-5 (2-4) presents an interesting variation on the usage of thusiastērion, for here both the altars (mizghoth, verse 3) of the strange gods, as well as the high places (habbamoth, verse 5) in the cities of Judah are ta thusiastēria,⁷ thus in this instance indicating that thusiastēria can serve in the same context both as altars for foreign pagan worship as well as high places at which apostate Israelites worshipped, just as bōmos was used in the same way, as shown above.

In summary, it is clear that quite generally the Septuagint shows a reticence to use bōmos for other than pagan altars, this being true when bōmos is used to translate the Hebrew mizbeaḥ

(except for the altar of witness in Joshua 22), and also when it translates the Hebrew, bamah, for the high places of the heathen or Israelite perverted places of worship. The Septuagint does not have any such strong feeling about thusiastērion, for, in the case when it is used to translate mizbeaḥ, it is used many times for the true altar of the Lord, as well as sometimes for the altars and high places of heathen worship.

BŌMOS IN THE APOCRYPHA

Bōmos is not used in the Pseudepigrapha, and in the Apocrypha⁸ only in I and II Maccabees which are to be dated in the last quarter of the second century B.C. and in the first quarter of the first century B.C., respectively,⁹ and in Sirach which was probably written in its original Hebrew form about 180 B.C. and translated into Greek in the last quarter of the 2nd Century B.C.¹⁰

In this Apocryphal literature bōmos is used to indicate pagan altars which were established by the edict of heathen rulers (as Antiochus, I Macc. 1:46) and which were scattered in various parts of Palestine, as at Modin (I Macc. 2:23-26) and at other places (I Macc. 2:45), including altars in the land of the Philistines (I Macc. 5:68).

A sharp contrast between the pagan bōmos and the Jewish thusiastērion is seen in the description of the Maccabean revolt against enforced idolatry on Israel in that the altar of the Lord at Jerusalem is called thusiastērion while those located in various parts of Judah are called bōmoi (I Macc. 1:54); and further the alien bōmoi which they had torn down at the temple area in Jerusalem the Maccabees replaced with a new thusiastērion (II Macc. 10:2, 3). Another instance where a sharp contrast is made occurs when heathen sacrifice is described as being made on a seemingly smaller pagan bōmos¹¹ which was located on the top of the thusiastērion of the Lord (I Macc. 1:59).

However, in this Apocryphal literature, although thusiastērion is generally used to indicate the altar of the Lord at Jerusalem (I Macc. 1:54; 1:59; II Macc. 10:3), sometimes the bōmos is used for the true altar of the Lord, as in the case when it is the burnt offering altar at the temple in Jerusalem at the time both of the triumph of Judas Maccabaeus (II Macc. 2:19) and of the downfall of that crafty high priest, Menelaus who had desecrated the altar (II Macc. 13:8).¹² In Sirach 50 reference made to the altar at Jerusalem at which the high priest, Simeon, served is both bōmos (lines 12 and 14) and thusiastērion (lines 11 and 15), this being, of course, poetic literature where variation of expression for an object might be expected.

In conclusion, in the Apocryphal literature, bōmos, although still generally being the word to depict pagan altars while thusiastērion is often the true altar of the Lord, now, on infrequent occasions, is used for the true altar of the Lord at Jerusalem.

BŌMOS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND APOSTOLIC FATHERS

In contrast to the single use of bōmos in Acts 17:23 the New Testament in rather frequent usage employs thusiastērion exclusively for the true altar of the Lord, whether it be reference

to the burnt offering altar in front of the tabernacle or temple (as in Matt. 5:23, 24; Luke 11:51; Rom. 11:3) or, less frequently, to the altar of incense within the sanctuary (Luke 1:11; Rev. 8:3, etc.).¹³

In the Apostolic Fathers there is hardly any reference to altars at all, and when they are mentioned they are only pagan ones or those of the Old Testament Scriptures, since by this time the Jewish temple and altar at Jerusalem had been destroyed. Actually bōmos occurs only once in this group of writings of the Fathers and that in connection with the altar of the sun at Heliopolis, Egypt (I Clem. 25:4).¹⁴ On the other hand, thusiastērion is used in reference to the altar of God at which the Old Testament priests served (I Clem. 32:2) and metaphorically to the spiritual altar of the Lord through which God's people are bound together (Ignatius, To the Magnesians 7:2).

Thus, it is clear, from what little evidence there is, that bōmos in the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers was thought to be only rightly and strictly reserved for reference to pagan altars, and further, by inference that the bōmos was unfit to be used for a true altar of the Lord, since thusiastērion, employed considerably in this literature, is used exclusively for such a true altar.

BŌMOS IN PHILO AND JOSEPHUS

Philo

For comparison with the usage of bōmos in the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers it is well to examine the Greek writings of the generally contemporaneous Jewish authors, Philo and Josephus.¹⁵

Philo, the Alexandrian Jew, departs from the general pattern of the Septuagint and Apocryphal literature and from the strict usage of the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers by employing bōmos quite frequently for the true altar of the Lord that stood before the Old Testament tabernacle (Sacrifice of Abel and Cain 137, 138; On Drunkenness 129, 130; Moses II, 150, 152; Special Laws I, 125, 147; Special Laws II, 162).¹⁶ He even speaks of this altar of the Lord as ho hieros bōmos, the sacred bōmos (Special Laws I, 254). As a matter of fact, the bōmos for Philo can be either the open air altar or the golden incense one (Special Laws I, 273 where using this same term he writes of these two distinct altars). It is but seldom that Philo, who, for the most part, is writing a philosophical and allegorical interpretation of parts of the Pentateuch, has occasion to employ bōmos for pagan altars (as he does in Moses I, 287,¹⁷ or even for the perverted altars of Israel (such as he does when he refers to Israel's calf worship in the wilderness, Moses II, 270).

In addition, Philo occasionally uses thusiastērion for the true altar of burnt offering (Special Laws I, 291, 285)¹⁸ and sometimes for the incense altar (On Drunkenness, 127).¹⁹ Evidence that Philo is quite conscious of his employing bōmos for the same altar which the Septuagint translates by thusiastērion is seen in Moses II, 196, when he says, "The great bōmos in the open court he [Moses] usually (eiōthe) calls by a name which means thusiastērion," an indication that he realizes that his usage runs counter to that of the Septuagint at this point.

In summary, although Philo can and does use thusiastērion a few times for the true burnt offering altar of the Lord (as does the New Testament), more often he employs bōmos for this designation, reserving thusiastērion for the incense altar (when he infrequently refers to this object), a designation which the New Testament, as noted above, occasionally makes. Further, he fails to show any concern, or even realization, that by his use of bōmos, quite different from that of the Septuagint, he might be contributing to any perversion of the worship of the Lord.

Josephus

Josephus, the Palestinian Jew, of priestly ancestry, engulfed in the political as well as religious ferment of his time, shows the same tendency, as Philo, to use bōmos in a way at variance with that employed by the Septuagint, Apocrypha, and especially that of the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers.

Being an historian, Josephus, of course, deals more at length with historical events not only of the Old Testament but also of the inter-testamental and contemporary periods as well, feeling free in such history to use bōmos for pagan altars such as those of Balak (in Numbers, Ant. 4:113), the altars at Modin (Ant. 12:270) and elsewhere in Palestine which, in the Maccabean period, Mattathias destroyed (Ant. 12:278), and also the pagan altars in the Roman Empire dedicated to the Emperor Gaius (Ant. 18:258).

For Josephus bōmos is also appropriate for the perverted or schismatic²⁰ altars of Israel, as exemplified by the altar of witness at the Jordan²¹ (Ant. 5:100, 101, 104), the altars of Jereboam²² about which Abijah castigates Jereboam and his army (Ant. 8:279) and the Jewish altar at Heliopolis, Egypt (Wars 7:428).

However, in addition, Josephus employs bōmos for the true altar of the Lord, exemplified by the ones erected by the patriarchs and other of God's Old Testament people, such as by Abraham as he entered Canaan (Ant. 1:157) and as he went to Moriah with Isaac (Ant. 1:224, 227, 228); by Moses on his victory over the Amalekites²³ (Ant. 3:60); and by David at the threshing floor of Oronnas, the Jebusite (Ant. 7:329). Also he uses bōmos for the true altar at the temple during the inter-testamental times (Wars 1:39; Ant. 13:372, 373; Wars 1:437).

Josephus' feeling of indifference as to whether bōmos is to be used for a pagan or true altar is seen even more distinctly in examining his deliberately mixed usage of bōmos and thusiastērion, either using the two terms interchangeably for the same altar, as in each of the cases of the altar of Jereboam at Bethel (Ant. 8:230), of Elijah on Carmel (Ant. 8:341), and of that altar at Jerusalem to which Manasses, brother of the high priest was forbidden to approach (Ant. 11:308, 9);²⁴ or in departing from any unified picture of thusiastērion as the true altar of the Lord, the one for burnt offering and incense, as seen in the New Testament, and frequently observed also in the Septuagint, by making the bōmos in Jerusalem in the Maccabean times²⁵ in a peculiar identification, the golden incense altar in distinction from the burnt offering altar which, although he at other times calls it bōmos, now calls it thusiastērion²⁶ (Ant. 12:250; 12:318, 9).²⁷

CONCLUSIONS AS TO THE USAGE OF BŌMOI

Some basic reasons which suggest themselves as to why the Septuagint and books in the Apocrypha generally avoid the use of bōmos for the true altar of the Lord are, in the first place, that since the Hellenistic culture and religious ideas, spread particularly as a result of the activities of Alexander the Great, were permeating much of the known world, it is most plausible to conclude that devout Jews and especially the translators of the Septuagint who, if we believe Philo's story, were selected by the high priest at Jerusalem,²⁸ being exposed to this Hellenistic culture, would resist anything, especially such a concept associated with pagan worship as bōmos, which might possibly indicate a perversion of the worship of the true God.

Furthermore, the Jews of these Hellenistic times were surely conscious of the fact that altars called bōmoi often were dedicated to pagan gods, whether individually or collectively,²⁹ and must have felt that the very use of the word, bōmos, for the true altar of the Lord might suggest recognition of such gods.

That the Septuagint particularly was conscious of this matter of upholding the pure worship of the Lord is seen also in its sparing use of another word used in worship, hieros, and even then not using it for the Hebrew קֹדֶשׁ and קָדוֹשׁ. It has been observed on this point:

This reserve of the LXX in respect of hieros is striking and eloquent. . . . The LXX translators felt strongly the pagan and cultic sense of the term. It was too freighted to allow of its usage as an equivalent of קֹדֶשׁ. On the other hand, the rarer and less definite hagios, with its more fluid meaning, was better adapted to take on a distinctive new sense.³⁰

Although Philo and Josephus show a usage of bōmos far broader than that to be found in the Septuagint and Apocrypha and particularly different from that of the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers, the reasons for this broader usage can be accounted for, in each of the two authors, differently.

In the light of the Hellenistic culture of Alexandria by which Philo could not have helped being influenced, and more particularly, in the light of the Greek philosophical thought in which he was steeped,³¹ it is no wonder that this author thought it proper to couch concepts often in Greek terms used ordinarily by pagan authors and no doubt by citizens of the Greek city of Alexandria,³² and therefore must have thought that it was perfectly in order, even as a Jew, to employ bōmos, the ordinary term to use for the object on which sacrifice was made, for Jewish and pagan altars alike.

Josephus, the Palestinian Jew, writing from a different viewpoint, not as Philo who in active and determined protest against the persecution of the Jews was a part of an embassy to the Roman Emperor,³³ found himself able, as a Jew, to defend his own nation's position and also to work with the Roman government and defend its actions. Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that Josephus' indiscriminate use of bōmos, now as a pagan altar, now as a true one of the Lord, and sometimes as an equivalent of thusiastērion with which he interchanges it in referring to the same altar, was done consciously and deliberately,³⁴ as a part of his realiza-

tion of indebtedness to Rome³⁵ and of his accommodations to pagan concepts and ideas, evidently with little or no thought that thereby he might be defiling the true worship of the Lord by using such a term.

The reasons given for the strict usage of bōmos in the Septuagint apply also to the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers. However, in addition, since these Christian writings were influenced by the Septuagint and often quote it, it is to be expected unless other strong forces to the contrary could be shown to have negated this influence, that they would follow the terminology of this Greek translation, especially in important terms, such as bōmos. Furthermore, the New Testament and Apostolic Fathers, in maintaining a true worship of the Lord in opposition to the pagan deities to whom the bōmos often was dedicated, and in realizing that Christ as priest and sacrifice of the true spiritual altar of God is preeminent over all, would naturally guard against using anything, even a term such as bōmos, which might suggest that His position is shared or taken by a pagan god. That the minds of the writers of the New Testament might be concerned with such possible perversion of the true worship of God is made more plausible by the realization that in the general Palestinian area itself, in Central Syria, there was found on or near an altar erected before a Greek temple an inscription, Zeus bōmos, which Moulton and Milligan observe to be an indication of Hellenistic as well as Syrian religious thought of that ancient time.³⁶

The New Testament and Apostolic Fathers could take the Greek term kurios and adapt it to the true worship of God,³⁷ but they could not bring themselves to do such with bōmos, since this latter term, in representing that visible and permanent structure, the altar, involved, in the mind of the average man, a more personal and practical involvement on the part of the individual with the god of that altar to whom he brought sacrifice and with whom he had fellowship.³⁸

Thus, in contrast to the far broader and different usage of Philo and Josephus, and to some extent, of the Apocryphal literature examined regarding bōmos and its relationship to thusiastērion, it is to be seen that the fact that the New Testament follows the Septuagint in regard to the usage of bōmos, and, beyond, exhibits an exclusive strictness in its use of thusiastērion points up again, on the one hand, the definite hostility of the New Testament, even as is exemplified in the Old Testament, to the heathen polytheistic religions and its exclusive adherence, on the other, to the worship of the God of the Scriptures, and further emphasizes the importance it places on the distinctive and proper use of the very words of its own text, as well as upon the theological content of the terms so used.

DOCUMENTATION

1. F. F. Bruce mentions places in Greek literature in which reference is made to altars to unknown or unnamed gods, but doesn't say anything about the absence of the word elsewhere in the New Testament. F. F. Bruce, The Acts of the Apostles, The Greek Text

(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952) pp. 335, 6; and F. F. Bruce, Commentary on the Book of Acts, The English Text (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), pp. 355, 6. Alford, Lange's Commentary, The Interpreter's Bible, and others give much the same information. H. Alford, The Greek Testament, Vol. II (5th ed., London: Rivingtons, 1865), pp. 195, 6; G. V. Lechler, The Acts of the Apostles in J. P. Lange's, Commentary on the Holy Scriptures (new ed., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), p. 324; Interpreter's Bible, Vol. IX (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1954), p. 234.

2. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, ed. by G. Kittel, and tr. and ed. by G. W. Bromiley, Vols. I and III (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964-65), "thuō."
3. Bōmos does not occur in other of the Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphical books.
4. See W. F. Albright, Archaeology and the Religion of Israel (4th ed.; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), p. 202, and W. H. Mare, A Study of the Greek Altar in Classical Greek Literature, (Philadelphia, Pa.: Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1962), Chapter II.
5. The Hebrew, hamah, the high place, is frequently used for a heathen or pagan high place of worship, but it is also used as a place of worship of the Lord as in the times of Samuel (I Sam. 9:12, 25; 10:5, 13), David (I Chron. 21:29), and Solomon (II Chron. 1:3, 13). F. Brown, S. R. Driver and C. A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1952), "hamah."
6. There is a variation in the textual evidence here: either thusiastērion or hagiastērion. See Alfred Rahlfs, ed., Septuaginta Vol. II (3rd ed.; Stuttgart: Privileg Wurtf. Bibelanstalt, for the American Bible Society, New York, 1949) on Psalm 82:13.
7. The words, "high places," (habbamoth) in II Chronicles 14:3 are translated tahupsēla.
8. See E. Hatch and H. A. Redpath, A Concordance to the Septuagint, Vol. I (Graz-Austria: Akademische Druck--U. Verlagsanstalt, 1954), "bōmos."
9. R. H. Charles, ed., The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, Vol. I (Oxford: at the Clarendon Press, 1913), pp. 60, 128, 129.
0. Charles, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 293.
1. That the bōmos could be of moderate, or even of a size small enough to carry see Mare, op. cit., pp. 33, 34.
2. Of course in this latter instance it is possible that the author thought that since the altar at Jerusalem in this case had been desecrated by the high priest, it therefore deserved the description, bōmos.
3. Luke, who uses bōmos for a pagan altar (Acts 17:23) also uses thusiastērion twice in his Gospel for Jewish altars of the Lord, once of the altar of burnt offering (Luke 11:51) and once for the incense altar (Luke 1:11). Actually only Luke and Matthew refer to the thusiastērion (Matt. 5:23, 24; 23:18, 19, 20; 23:35), while Paul makes reference to it in Romans 11:3; I Corinthians 9:13; 10:18, it occurring also in Hebrews (7:13; 13:10), James (2:21) and Revelation (6:9; 8:3 [2], 5; 9:13; 11:1; 14:18; and 16:7).
4. Reference is also made to this pagan altar in Herodotus 2:73 and Pliny, Nat. Hist. 10:2.
5. The dates for Philo are about 20 B.C. to A.D. 40 to 50, and those of Josephus from A.D. 37-38 to about A.D. 100. See F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, tr., Philo, in The Loeb Classical Library Vol. I (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), pp. ix, x; and H. St. J. Thackeray, tr., Josephus, in The Loeb Classical Library Vol. I (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. vii-x.

16. The further identification of which he indicates sometimes by the specification, ho euphathrōi bōmos, the altar in the open air, or open court.
17. Where the reference is to be the seven altars of Balak and Balaam.
18. In Special Laws I, 285, Philo is speaking of the continual fire on the brazen altar, as described in Leviticus 6:9, 12, 13.
19. Which incense altar he sometimes calls the thumiastērion (Moses II, 101; Special Laws I, 231).
20. This is the term used by Thackeray to describe such altars. H. St. J. Thackeray, A Lexicon to Josephus, Parts I and II (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste, Paul Geuthner, 1930 and 1934), "bōmos."
21. Joshua 22.
22. Compare II Chronicles 13:2ff.
23. Exodus 17:15.
24. Compare Nehemiah 13:28, LXX II Esdras 23:28.
25. For further background as to the desecration of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes, see I Maccabees 29, 54.
26. In Ant. 12:250 Josephus actually uses the plural, ta thusiastēria, which Antiochus carried away from the temple area, by which the historian must have included the altar of burnt offering. In Ant. 12:318, 9 Judas Maccabaeus is said to have built a new thusiastērion of stone outside the temple.
27. Compare also the Ant. 8:104, 105 where the incense altar is called ho chruseos bōmos, and the altar before the temple is called to chalcheon thusiastērion.
28. Philo, Moses II, 31, 32.
29. Altars (bōmoi) in Classical Greek literature are associated with a number of Greek gods including the Olympians, with Zeus and Apollo heading the list. See Mare, op. cit., pp. 97-121. That bōmoi were dedicated to pagan gods in the Hellenistic and early centuries of the Christian era is seen in the archaeological remains of altars dedicated to gods in such places as Asia Minor (Priene [3rd century B.C.; Miletus, altars dedicated to Trajan and others dedicated to Zeus, etc.; Kos an altar dedicated to the "new god," Julius Caesar]; Alexandria [an altar with painted dedication to King Ptolemy]; and Dura-Europos [an altar with inscriptions in Greek and Palmyrene although the nature of the content of the inscriptions was not indicated]). See C. G. Yavis, Greek Altars (St. Louis, Mo.: St. Louis University Press, 1949) pp. 144, 156, 160, 177, 203.
30. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, op. cit., Vol. III, "hieros," p. 226.
31. See H. A. Wolfson, Philo, Vol. I (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 55ff., 93ff.
32. Strabo, the Greek geographer of Pontus, whose life covered parts of both the first century B.C. and the first A.D., in describing areas such as Asia Minor and places on the East African coast sometimes identifies locations by naming evidently well-known altars, employing the word expected to be used, bōmos. See Strabo, Geog. 13:3.5; 16.4.9; 16.4.15.
33. F. H. Colson, Philo, The Embassy to Gaius in The Loeb Classical Library, Vol. X (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962).
34. Thackeray says he sometimes does so for variety. H. St. J. Thackeray, op. cit., on "bōmos."
35. He had been afforded many privileges and benefits by the Romans. See William R. Farmer, Maccabees, Zealots and Josephus (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), p. 15.

36. J. H. Moulton and G. Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., former ed. 1930, present ed., 1949), "bōmos," p. 119.
37. See A. Deissmann, tr. L. R. M. Strachan, Light From the Ancient East, (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Book House, 1965), pp. 349-357.
38. Concerning communion with the god at the pagan altar, see Mare, op. cit., pp. 52-53. Compare from the scriptural viewpoint the communion aspect in the peace offering of Leviticus (3:1-17; 7:11-34; 19:5-8; 22:21-25), and of Christ being the bread of heaven by partaking spiritually of whom the Christian has life and communion with God (John 6:51-53; I Cor. 10:16). See S. H. Kellogg, The Book of Leviticus, in the Expositor's Bible, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, Vol. I (New York: George H. Doran Co. n.d.), pp. 257-261.