

In the modern world, people, as a society, have always given themselves a goal or goals that they would like to attain at some point during their lifetime. Many people seek to attain riches, love, happiness or high stature within society. When we people set that goal, we tend to mold our lifestyles around it. As people work throughout their lives to achieve this ultimate goal, it becomes apparent to others what it is we are working so hard for. Just as this pattern is evident in modern society, it can also be seen in the times of Homer, particularly in the great Greek epic, the Iliad. This distinct pattern can be seen in Achilles, one of the most vital characters in the story. Achilles, being the ultimate most powerful warrior of all time, wishes for nothing in his life but to be the most glorious man alive, mortal or immortal. It is this profound desire for glory and honor, that in the end leads to his demise. Achilles speech, given while he is distraught over the death of his closest friend Patroklos, is an excellent example of Achilles' desire (Iliad, 18.79). Patroklos is slayed by Hektor, the Trojans greatest warrior and Achilles' main rival. Hektor, takes the armor (given to him by Achilles') off of his dead body, and puts it on himself. Hektor is described as "riding around in all its glory". After word of Patroklos' death, the Achaians are intensely dejected. To show just how disheartened the Greeks are, Homer describes the men as lamenting. "(Then sighing heavily)... my dear companion has perished, Patroklos, whom I loved beyond all other companions, as well as my own life...Thetis spoke to him, letting tears fall" (377, Iliad, 18.78).

It can be sensed that, although in deep mourning for his lost friend, Achilles is just as well upset because he sensed a slight degree of failure.

"Now, since I am not going back to the beloved land of my fathers, since I was no light of safety to Patroklos, nor to my other companions..." (378, Iliad, 18.101).

This failure in the sense that, Achilles being the greatest warrior in all the land able to kill hordes of men at will, was incapable of saving the person that mattered the most to him. This insecurity is the source of Achilles "duty" to exact revenge upon Hektor, the assassin of Patroklos.

Achilles makes the decision to kill Hektor in spite of the fact that his fate will be to die. Even though Achilles plans to attack Hektor for vengeful purposes, he has an underlying motive. Because Achilles feels he has failed his friend, he wants or needs to save face. This is in order to keep his goal of ultimate glory within his grasp. Achilles sees the opportunity has been waiting for all his life. By killing Hektor and then being slain himself, he achieves his lofty goal of ultimate glory.

It is evident through this passage that Homer is building up this grand battle between two of the greatest warriors of this time period. Achilles, already regarded as the greatest fighter, speaks of Hektor not in a degrading manner, rather in a respectful manner, taking into account his numerous heroic feats.

"...my other companions, who in their numbers went down before the glorious Hektor" (378, Iliad, 18.102).

Homer wrote this line as if he were a promoter of a boxing fight. He lifts the strength of Hektor's character, and in doing so makes for a more rivaled battle. At this point in the passage, Achilles in a sense forewarns everyone of his intentions, that no mortal, immortal or fear of death is going to stand in his way of his goal.

"If such is the fate which has been wrought for me, shall lie still, when I am dead. Now I must win excellent glory..." (378, Iliad, 18.120).

This line by Achilles is in a fashion, a battle cry for the blood of Hektor. Upon hearing this, Thetis goes to Hephaistos, a "glorious smith", to create a valiant suit of armor for the ultimate warrior.

Eventually, the two fight a magnificent battle, where the "Wrath of Achilles" is too much for Hektor, and he is killed. Ironically, Hektors brother, Paris,

shoots him in the heel, killing him. There is plenty of evidence in this passage to show that Achilles' ultimate goal in life was not to be wealthy, not happy, rather, he was constantly in seek of glory. So much so, that he also paid the ultimate price with his life. Some modern day people may think that Achilles was an insane man, who did not apply any logic to his actions. However, these same people fail to realize that in that time period, Homer's time, dying with honor and glory was heavily preferred over living in shame. And Achilles took this concept too its highest level, sacrificing life for glory.