

The text form of LXX Genesis 28:12 by Philo of Alexandria and in the Jesus-Logion of John 1:51

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Most studies on the explicit quotations in the New Testament in the past mainly occupied themselves with their application and reinterpretation within their new contexts. Recent research on the Antiochene text (formerly Proto-Theodotion), combined with an upsurge in text critical investigations – with the aim to establish the similarities and differences amongst existing LXX witnesses in the quest for the LXX text form at the author's time of writing – begs for new investigations into the *Vorlage* and nature of the quotations in Philo of Alexandria and the New Testament. Being part of a broader project, and given the scope of this investigation, this article intends to investigate the only case in John's Gospel where the same Torah quotation also occur in Philo, namely that of Genesis 28:12 in John 1:51. This case is well attested in the *Corpus Philonicum*, where it is quoted three times – the first time as a long and extensive quotation (Somn. 1.3), and thereafter in two shorter quotations (Somn. 1.133; 2.19). The article attempts to investigate the text forms of Genesis 28:12, in comparison to those of Philo and John, in order to determine whether there are traces of a possible common *Vorlage* of the Old Greek Version (OGV) between these two authors.

Die teksvorm van LXX Genesis 28:12 deur Filo van Aleksandrië en die Jesus-Logion van Johannes 1:51. Die meeste studies wat oor die eksplisiete sitate in die Nuwe Testament handel, het in die verlede veral op die toepassing en die herinterpretasie van hierdie sitate binne hulle nuwe kontekste gefokus. Die primêre fokus het egter intussen verskuif, sodat die huidige navorsing eerder poog om die ooreenkomste en verskille tussen bestaande Septuagint (LXX-) teksgetuies vas te stel in 'n soeke na die onderliggende LXX-teksvorm (*Vorlage*) waarop 'n bepaalde Nuwe-Testamentiese skrywer sy aanhaling sou baseer het. Dit is veral waarneembaar in studies aangaande die Antiogeense teks (vroeër bekend as Proto-Theodotion), asook in die oplewing van tekskritiese studies. Hierdie ontwikkelings vereis nuwe ondersoeke na die *Vorlage* en die aard van die aanhalings wat in sowel Filo as in die Nuwe Testament voorkom. Die ondersoek wat hier aangebied word, vorm deel van 'n groter projek en analiseer die enigste geval in die Evangelie volgens Johannes waar dieselfde Tora-aanhaling ook by Filo te vind is, naamlik Genesis 28:12 in Johannes 1:51. Die aanhaling kom driekeer by Filo voor – in *Somn.* 1.3 as 'n lang en uitgebreide sitaat en daarna in twee verkorte vorms in *Somn.* 1.133 en 2.19. Hierdie artikel poog om die teksvorms van Genesis 28:12 te ondersoek – in vergelyking met sowel Filo en Johannes – ten einde vas te stel of daar enige moontlike aanduidings van 'n gemeenskaplike LXX-*Vorlage* van die Ou Griekse Vertaling (OGV) tussen albei outeurs is.

Introduction

During recent investigations into the LXX *Vorlage* of the explicit quotations in Hebrews (cf. Steyn 2011; also 2002:43–50; 2006:135–131; 2007:152–168), it was discovered that nearly all Hebrews' explicit quotations from the Torah – all fairly brief quotations – were also to be found in Philo of Alexandria (with only the exception of the allusions to Gn 47:31, and the quotations from Dt 9:19 and 32:43). These Torah quotations (as well as the longer quotation from Pr 3:11–12 in Heb 12:5–6) in Hebrews, already occurred in the *Corpus Philonicum*, mainly in *Legum allegoriae* III. Furthermore, apart from the overlap in occurrence, also the form of all the explicit Torah quotations (allusions and references excluded), were found to be in agreement with the form of the quotations as found in Philo – against those of both the MT and of the LXX (Steyn 2006:135–151). Both Hebrews and Philo together deviated from the readings of the MT as well as from the LXX witnesses.¹ This raises the suspicion that both Hebrews and Philo might have known and used an earlier, or at least another LXX version known to both of them. Thus it could well be that in this case Philo and Hebrews independently used the same version of the Scriptures in another form than that known to us in the reconstructed versions of the LXX (and the MT) –

1. In the larger picture, Runia (1993:76) also pointed to the use of four texts in particular, namely Genesis 2:2, Exodus 25:40, Joshua 1:5 and Proverbs 3:11–12, which are 'so close to Philo that coincidence must be ruled out'. Runia refers particularly to Hebrew 13:5b, 'a composite text derived from Jos. 1:5, Deut. 31:8 and possibly Gen. 28:15, which is cited in exactly the same form by Philo in *Conf.* 166'.

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which, in turn might actually even strengthen possible Alexandrian commonalities between the two. The fact is that this phenomenon begs for further and more careful investigation, which led this researcher to a larger project that investigates the text form of the Torah quotations common to the *Corpus Philonicum*² and that of the New Testament (NT). Studies thus far have included Paul's letters³ to the Galatians (Steyn 2012:444–464), the Genesis quotations in Romans (Steyn 2015:pages unknown), the Corinthian correspondence (Steyn 2013a:193–210), the Gospels according to Matthew and Mark (Steyn 2013b:1–20), as well as the Acts of the apostles (Steyn 2013c:164–181). Further studies, however, are still lacking on the rest of the Pentateuch quotations in Romans, on Luke's Gospel, and on John's Gospel – the latter which will now be partially investigated here.

The relation between the quotations in Philo's works, and the LXX text form of those citations, has already been a topic of interest in the past (cf. Dell'Acqua 2003:25–52; Kraft 2005:237–254; Runia 1993:24). Philo considered the LXX Pentateuch as faithful, and as an inspired translation of the Hebrew,⁴ and the mere distribution and frequency of Torah quotations by Philo⁵ stands as testimony to the importance of the Torah for him. But it has also been noted that 'the relationship between Philo and the biblical text is quite complex' (Dell'Acqua 2003:25). Very often, those Torah quotations that do overlap between Philo and the NT occur more than once in Philo – which, perhaps, testify to its familiarity in the Jewish exegetical tradition. This cautions one, however, not to draw conclusions too quickly from these cases, as they were often orally transmitted, and chances for variation in such orally transmitted quotations were probably higher.

A test case: Philo and John

Comparative studies on the quotations from the Torah in the NT seldom take cognisance of the *Corpus Philonicum*. The place of the Hellenistic Jew, Philo of Alexandria, alongside such textual comparisons is often largely neglected. Similar to this oversight in NT comparisons, is the tendency to ignore the contribution of NT studies where those Old Testament (OT) quotations in Philo overlap with the NT. This overlap of OT quotations between Philo and the NT is of crucial importance in studies which occupy themselves with the text forms of the LXX that might underlie these quotations. Rather than to focus only either on the *Corpus Philonicum*, or

on the *Corpus Novi Testamenti*, in our quest for earlier text forms of the LXX – as has largely and often been the practice in the past – this investigation hopes to incorporate both corpuses, by exploring the explicit Torah quotations that overlap between John's Gospel and Philo's works. Adding to the existing comparative data, the current contribution might assist one in coming closer to answering the question at hand – at least partially – regarding the particular LXX version used by individual NT authors and by Philo. Given this background, the focus of this article will thus be primarily synoptic in nature, that is it is aimed at determining the differences and similarities between the text forms, in order to establish whether a common early LXX *Textvorlage* might be traced in Philo's writings and that of John's Gospel.

This investigation will thus *not* particularly be asking questions about the *interpretation* of Scripture by these authors (cf. Steyn 1995), about their theology, or about the manner in which they used and applied Scripture. As far as possible, it will be focusing in the first instance on *the text form* of their quotations, and on whether this could be of assistance in the reconstruction of an early LXX version. The reception of these quotations within their new contexts will be secondary.

This area of research has been a central focus of the contributions of Maarten Menken, who made significant contributions in this regard, especially on the Gospels according to John (Menken 1996), and Matthew (Menken 2004). Menken's efforts helped to steer scholarship away from both merely focusing on the NT author's theological hermeneutic and from the function of the quotations in their new contexts. The emphasis on the use of the OT in the NT has now gradually moved to investigations on the (LXX) text forms underlying the NT quotations. Neither being absent, nor being the point of departure, but only later in the process, this involves a differentiation between establishing whether the differences in an explicit quotation would be due to an author's *Textvorlage*, that is the existence of another text form, or whether they are due to the author's own hermeneutic – that being for theological, rhetorical or stylistic reasons.

Distribution of Torah quotations

There are in general not many explicit quotations in John's Gospel, especially when compared to the synoptic Gospels. Koestenberger (2007:419–420) identified only 14; and the count in Nestle-Aland (28th ed.) totals 20⁶ – including one from the psalms of Solomon. These quotations are in general very brief. The majority were taken from the Psalms (probably due 'to the cultic character of the gospel which is closely linked to the Jewish Festivals'). The remaining quotations were taken from Isaiah and the minor prophets, whilst only two *explicit quotations* belong to the Torah.

2. Ryle (1895:xiii) labelled this a 'pre-Christian' collection: 'His testimony to the Greek Bible is indisputably pre-Christian. In that fact lies the especial value of his Scriptural citations.' See also Böhm (2004:378): In the *Corpus Philonicum* '... ist ja bekanntlich ... so viel Schriftauslegung wie nirgends sonst im jüdisch-literarischen Erbe der Antike erhalten ...'.

3. Michel (1972:55) already drew attention to Paul's use of the LXX: 'Dass die griechische Bibel und zwar in verschiedenen Versionen, dem Apostel seine Bibel gewesen ist, die er immer benutzt hat, kann nach den Untersuchungen von Kautzsch und Vollmer nicht mehr zweifelhaft sein.'

4. Philo's knowledge of Hebrew is debated amongst scholars, but many assume that he most likely did not know Hebrew and could not consult it by comparing it with the Greek (cf. Gooding 1983:89–125; Wright III 2006:60).

5. Cf. Böhm (2004:378): '(Im *Corpus Philonicum*) ... ist ja bekanntlich ... so viel Schriftauslegung wie nirgends sonst im jüdisch-literarischen Erbe der Antike erhalten ...'.

6. Three are from the Torah, ten from the Psalms, three from Isaiah, three from the minor prophets, and one from psalms of Salomon. S. Moyise (2010:67) lists only four on the lips of Jesus: '... as the "bread of life" in John 6.25–59 (Isa. 54.14), the title "Son of God" in 10.31–39 (using Psalm 82.6), Judas' betrayal in 13.18–20 as a fulfilment of Psalm 41.9, and the world's hatred of Jesus in 15.18–25 as a fulfilment of Psalm 69.4'.

TABLE 1: A comparison between LXX Genesis 28:12, Matthew 26:64, Acts 10:11 and John 1:51.

| Genesis 28:12 LXX | Matthew 26:64 | Acts 10:11 | John 1:51 |
|--|--|--|--|
| ... τὸν οὐρανόν, καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ ἀνέβαινον καὶ κατέβαινον ἐπ' αὐτῆς. | <u>Λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· σὺ εἶπας, πλην λέγω ὑμῖν ἅπ' ἄρτι ὄψεσθε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καθήμενον ἐκ δεξιῶν τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.</u> | καὶ θεωρεῖ τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεοργμένον καὶ καταβαίνον σκεδῶς ... | καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὄψεσθε τὸν οὐρανὸν ἀνεοργότα καὶ τοὺς ἄγγελους τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναβαίοντας καὶ καταβαίοντας ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. |

Explicit quotations from the pentateuch are thus very rare in John's Gospel. However, a large amount of *allusions to, and verbal parallels from*, the Torah can be identified in John's Gospel (2007:419–420) – most of which have parallels with quotations in the *Corpus Philonicum*. The highest density (in fact, virtually all!) of the allusions is to be found in John 1–12, and then again in John 19.

Returning to the identified explicit quotations from the Torah in John's Gospel, it is only the following two quotations that can be identified and clearly defined as explicit Torah quotations.

John 19:36 (cf. Bynum 2012): (Ex 12:10, 46): According to Koestenberger (2007:415), only one quotation from the Torah can be identified in John's Gospel, namely that of Exodus 12:46 (or Nm 9:12; Ps 34:20) in John 19:36 (2007:418). Nestle-Aland (28th ed.) agrees on this as an explicit quotation, but attributes it to Exodus 12:10, as well as to Exodus 12:46, and Psalm 34:21 in John 19:36. This quotation, however, is not present in the *Corpus Philonicum*.

John 1:51 (Gn 28:12): Nestle-Aland (26th, 27th and 28th ed.) – quite rightly, in my opinion – identifies the case of John 1:51 as an explicit quotation, and contributes it to Genesis 28:12.⁷ In this instance, this quotation is also present in the *Corpus Philonicum*. Most scholars, however, do not consider this case as an explicit quotation in John's Gospel.⁸ And yet the Jesus-logion of John 1:51 is introduced with the words: καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ. The logion itself, in turn, clearly introduces the wording of Genesis 28:12 when Jesus says: ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν. It is only John who uses the double 'amen, amen' (25 times), whereas the synoptic Gospels would prefer 'I say to you', or 'Amen, I say to you' (Brown 1982:84). The fact that the double *amen* is used in the Hebrew text of Numbers 5:22 (translated with *Γένοιτο, γένοιτο* in the LXX) might be an important clue regarding the context of this quotation. Brown (1982:84) points out that the Jews used the double "'amen" ... in corroboration and response, particularly to prayer ...'. John's presentation of the quotation, cloaked in this formula, could point to the following: its authenticity as a Jesus-logion; or liturgical use in an early Christian congregational environment (such as the 'Johannine community'); or John's own creative editorial presentation of the quotation as either, or both, of the previous alternatives. The fact is that some scholars doubt if this verse originally belonged to the Nathanael narrative. Collins (1992:1030), for instance,

is of the opinion that 'the promise was most probably an originally independent unit of material, appended to the story of Nathanael by the evangelist'. However, the Jesus-logion of John 1:51 might actually be a conflation between LXX Genesis 28:12, and traditions such as those of Matthew 26:64 and Acts 10:11. Compare the following (see Table 1).

Given the scope of this investigation, that is to compare the explicit quotations from the Torah, which overlap with those by Philo, it is disappointing to note that only a single quotation is left for the purposes of comparison, namely that of Genesis 28:12 in John 1:51. This case is well testified to in the *Corpus Philonicum*, where it is quoted three times – the first time as a long and extensive quotation (*Somn.* 1.3), and thereafter in two shorter quotations (*Somn.* 1.133; 2.19).

The case of LXX Genesis 28:12 in John 1:51

The Jacob narrative of Genesis 28 – 'die erste Traumerzählung im AT' (Westermann 1981:553) – most likely forms the background of the Jesus-logion here in John 1:51.⁹ Hence, 'Nathanael, the true Israelite, is (here) promised a vision of the Son of Man by Jesus' (Collins 1992:1030). James McCaffrey (1988) writes in connection to this as follows:

The *tertium comparationis* between the vision of Jacob in Gn 28:12 and the promised future vision of the Son of Man in Jn 1:51 is the revelation of 'a house of God and the gate of heaven'.¹⁰ In the symbolic vision of Jn 1:51 the disciples will see the Son of Man as a τόπος, that is a 'sanctuary', or 'holy place', where heaven will be opened up for an unbroken two-way intercommunication between God and man. The object of the vision of Jn 1:51 is 'heaven opened'. (pp. 225–227)

Important for the understanding and interpretation of John's Jesus-logion, is the fact that the 'ladder' (cf. Muraoka 2009:401)¹¹ – according to the LXX, but the Hebrew probably implies a 'stairway'¹² – as well as the ascending and descending (note the sequence!)¹³ angels of God, connect the

9. See also Barrett (1978:186–187): 'That the story of Jacob is alluded to seems certain, though neither in Genesis nor in John is it made clear what the angels are doing.'

10. 'It is not only Gen 28:12 which is important for an understanding of John 1:51. So, too, is the whole immediate context of the Bethel scene (Gen 28:10–22), where the vision of Gen 28:12 is interpreted for us by the reaction of Jacob: "How awesome is this place (ὁ τόπος). This is none other than the house of God (οἶκος Θεοῦ), and this is the gate of heaven (ἡ πύλη τοῦ οὐρανοῦ)" (Gen 28:17)' (McCaffrey 1988:225–227).

11. Correctly translated by Pietersma and Wright (2007:24), as well as by Kraus and Karrer (2009:30).

12. Loader (1991) states: 'The Septuagint preserves what was doubtless the original intention by translating *bē* unambiguously as 'on it', so that we should have to assume that the evangelist, or his tradition, is influenced by the ambiguous Hebrew text. 'On him' would here still refer to the ladder, but Jesus is the ladder' (p. 258).

13. *Contra* Culpepper (1998:128): '... the angels descending and ascending' – but correctly so a few lines earlier (1998:127–128).

7. Loader (1991:257) pointed out that 'scholars differ concerning the particular reference of the imagery of 1:51. Almost universally scholars recognize an allusion to Jacob's dream at Bethel'.

8. It is omitted by Archer and Chirichigno (1983), and by Koestenberger (2007:415–512). Culpepper (1998:128) refers to it as 'allusion to Scripture', and Van Selms (1979:89) reckons 'onze tekst zinspeelt Joh. 1:51'.

- Secondly, John's version uses the accusative plural, τοὺς ἀγγέλους, whereas the LXX and Philo use the nominative plural, οἱ ἄγγελοι. None of the Johannine textual witnesses support the nominative reading of the LXX and Philo. John's use of the accusative is the result of his introduction of these phrases with the main verb, ὄψεσθε – which now has both τὸν οὐρανὸν and τοὺς ἀγγέλους as objects of what they will see.
- Thirdly, John's version uses the present participle active accusative masculine plural form of ἀναβαίνω and καταβαίνω, whereas the LXX and Philo use the imperfect indicative active third person plural in both instances. The Hebrew text also uses the Qal participle masculine plural – which seems to be closer to John's preference. All the Johannine manuscripts confirm John's use of the participle instead of the imperfect. There exists no alternative Johannine manuscript tradition supporting the imperfect-reading of the LXX and Philo. On the other hand, only a single LXX witness – the 9th or 10th century CE minuscule 509 – contains the same reading as John 1:51 with the participle form of both verbs. 'The sudden awkward transition from the singular ὄψη in Jn 1:50 to the plural ὄψεσθε in Jn 1:51 opens up (in typical Johannine style) a wider perspective' (McCaffrey 1988:225–227). John's use of ὄψεσθε as the main verb, results in the construction:

ὄψεσθε → τὸν οὐρανὸν (acc) + ἀνεωρότα (part)
 → τοὺς ἀγγέλους (acc) + ἀναβαίνοντας καὶ καταβαίνοντας (part)

- Fourthly, John's version reads ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, whereas the LXX and Philo simply read ἐπ' αὐτῆς. Similar to the cases above, also in this case none of the Johannine textual witnesses support the readings as found in the LXX and Philo. Turning to the LXX, apart from some insignificant alterations to the phrase ἐπ' αὐτῆς during the process of scribal transmission,¹⁸ none of the LXX textual witnesses testify to its omission or complete substitution with a similar phrase as found in John 1:51. Thus, there seems to be little doubt that John's reading is the result of that author's own redactional change due to his theological application of this quotation in terms of Jesus. John replaces the implied 'Jacob' with 'the Son of Man'.¹⁹ He becomes the true Jacob 'on whom and in whose work faith would see the angels of God ascending and descending' (McNamara 2010:221–222). The revelation of the identity of Jesus develops in the Nathanael narrative (1:43–51) from the *human* (Jn 1:45, 'Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth'), to the *teacher* and *king* (Jn 1:49, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!'), to the *glorified figure through revelation from heaven* in John 1:51 ('angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man'). Beasley-Murray (2002:lx) points out that 'The Hebrew term, סֻלָּם (*sūllām*), "ladder" is masculine; therefore בַּר (bō)

can mean either "on him" or "on it". The LXX decides for the latter, rendering בַּר as ἐπ' αὐτῆς agreeing with κλίμαξ, i.e. ladder. Thus, according to the LXX and Philo, the angels were ascending and descending – ἐπ' αὐτῆς – probably referring to the ladder, but in its exposition of Genesis 28:13, *Midrash Rabbah* 69.3 stated that the angels were ascending and descending 'on him', i.e. on Jacob.²⁰ Beasley-Murray (2002) is thus correct in observing that:

the key saying of John 1:51, which anticipates the whole course of the ministry of Jesus, rests on a resolution of the ambiguity in the statement as to whether the angels ascend and descend on the ladder or on Jacob. (p. lx)

Brown (1982) points out that:

some scholars think that the latter reading lies behind John's form of the saying. This would make the Son of Man (a collective figure in Dan vii) a replacement for Jacob (= Israel, and to some extent a collective figure). (p. 90)

But, nevertheless, Brown (1982) is of the opinion that 'the whole theory is dubious'.

Two general observations are in order, namely as Philo progresses with his use of the quotation from Genesis 28:12–15 in *Somn.* 1.3 to 1.133 to 2.19, the quotation gets shorter. Furthermore, if the traditional argument is true that the (Christian) scribes of the Philonic tradition altered the quotations in Philo to be on a par with those quotations in the NT – due to the scribes' knowledge of the NT text – then these cases in *Somn.* 1.3, 1.33 and 2.19 certainly prove the contrary. In all three instances the Philonic tradition closely follows that of the LXX, whereas the NT tradition of John 1:51 differs substantially from them.

But after having compared the LXX versions and the *Corpus Philonicum*, another textual tradition should briefly be taken note of, namely that of the Palestinian *Targum* – a text which appears to be a liturgical one.²¹ Here, the text of Genesis 28:12 developed midrashically and reads (translated by McNamara) in Neofiti:

And he [*Jacob*] dreamed, and behold, a ladder was fixed on the earth and its head reached to the height of the heavens, and behold, the angels who had accompanied him from the house of his father ascended to bear the good tidings to the angels on high, saying: 'Come and see a just man whose image is engraved in the throne of the Glory, whom you desired [*ithamedtun*] to see. 'And behold, the angels from before the Lord were ascending and descending and they observed him'. (McNamara 2010:221–222)

Conclusion

Three observations were made: Firstly, in identifying and distinguishing the explicit quotations and allusions from the Torah in John's Gospel, it was noted that, although there were numerous allusions to the Torah in John's Gospel (mainly to

18. ἐπ' αὐτῆς] απ αυτης 46; εις (ει 619) τον ουρανον 71 | αὐτῆς 961] αυτη D 911 15-708 C⁵² 79c 569 739 664* 343-344^c-730 392 z 55 99 DialTA 98r Genn 1649 = Sixt; αυτην 58-376^c-381^c 52-79^c-569-739 b d 56* 458 127-344* 799 318-527 319* Eus VI 232 (Wevers 1974:271).

19. Beasley-Murray (2002) says: 'In stating that the angels will be seen ascending and descending on the Son of Man, John 1:51 represents the Son of Man as replacing Jacob, and as becoming the place of mediation to man of the revelation and redeeming powers of the kingdom of God' (p. lx).

20. For an extensive discussion on the matter, see Brown (1982:90).

21. McNamara (1966:63–64) states: 'This we see from the recurrence of such expressions as "My people, children of Israel", a phrase used in the liturgy.'

be found in John 1–12 and John 19), only two possible explicit Torah quotations could be identified.

Secondly, in establishing which of these explicit quotations in John are also present in the *Corpus Philonicum*, it was found that only one, that is that of Genesis 28:12 in John 1:51 (which also occurs in Philo's *Somm.* 1.3, 1.133 and 2.19), could be found.

Thirdly, in investigating the text forms of the explicit quotations from the Torah common to Philo and John, in order to determine to what extent a common *Vorlage* was used, it became clear that in all four these cases, Philo very closely follows the known LXX versions; and that the differences between John's Gospel, in comparison to the LXX and Philo, show no signs of variant readings or scribal adaptations in the Johannine manuscript tradition. In fact, all the Johannine manuscripts are in agreement amongst each other in regard to the variant readings of the LXX and Philo. Neither is there any evidence in the LXX textual tradition of variant readings which agree with the Johannine version in the case of these differences. This leaves very little doubt that the differences should be ascribed to the editorial hand(s) of the Johannine school, rather than to an alternative LXX text form.

It was not the intention of this contribution to elaborate on the theology of the Johannine school and its possible hermeneutical reasons for these changes, but some remarks in this regard would be appropriate. By adapting the quotation from its narrative context in Genesis 28:12 to a discourse context in John 1:51, John stylistically alters the structure by using *accusatives plus participles* after his introduction of ὄψεσθε as the main verb – which results in his addition of the participle, ἀνεφώτα, his use of the accusative, τοὺς ἀγγέλους, and his use of the participles, ἀναβαίνω and καταβαίνω.

Furthermore, John's version changes ἐπ' αὐτῆς to ἐπὶ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Riesner has drawn attention to the fact that groups of Nazorites and Ebionites densely populated the south-western part of Bethanea, to which John 1:28 refers; and that 'this region attracted pious Jews of the most diverse background' – especially 'the adherents of Jewish sects, such as the Essenes ... or the forerunners of the Mandaeanes'. These groups, resembling the Essenes, considered Mount Hermon where they settled 'to be a place of special revelation'. Riesner (1992:704) concludes that John 1:51 'is associated with such expectations'.

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Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced him in writing this article.

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