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

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.

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 allegorae 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) –

¹In 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 Hebrews 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’.
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 and that of the New Testament (NT). Studies thus far have included Paul’s letters 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, and the mere distribution and frequency of Torah quotations by Philo 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 topic of OT quotations between Philo and 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 20 – 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 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 …’.

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).


6. Three are from the Torah, ten from the Psalms, three from Isaiah, three from the minor prophets, and one from psalms of Solomon. 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), Jesus’ betrayal in 13.18–20 as a fulfillment of Psalm 41.9, and the world’s hatred of Jesus in 15.18–25 as a fulfillment of Psalm 69.4’.

Explicit quotations from the penteuch 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 Exodus12:46, 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. Most scholars, however, do not consider this case as an explicit quotation in John’s Gospel. 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 background of the Jesus-logion here in John 1:51.

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.7 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: ὁμίῳ ὁμίῳ λέγω μη 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℉ óvoro, γέωρο 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).


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis 28:12 LXX</th>
<th>Matthew 26:64</th>
<th>Acts 10:11</th>
<th>John 1:51</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... τὸν οὐρανῷ, καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι τοῦ θεοῦ ἀνέβαινον καὶ κατέβαινον ἐπ᾽ αὐτός.</td>
<td>Ἰδοῦ τί αὕτη ἡ ἱδρύση τοῦ ἑαυτοῦ καὶ τοῦ σωτήρου, κατά τις πάνω τῆς δύναμεως καὶ ἄμεραν ἐπ᾽ ἄυμαν τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.</td>
<td>καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐπὶ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ τῷ οἴκῳ ἡ ἱδρύση τοῦ θεοῦ ἀνέβαινεν καὶ κατέβαινεν σκόπος ...</td>
<td>καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ ὡμίῳ ὡμίῳ λέγω μη ὑμῖν, ἀνθρώπων τοῦ θεοῦ ἀνέβαινεν καὶ κατέβαινεν σκόπος ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ τοῦ αὐτοῦ.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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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 (ο ἱερός), this is the gate of heaven (τὸ πύλη τοῦ οὐρανοῦ)” (Gen 28:17) (McCaffrey 1988:225–227).


12. Loader (1991) states: ‘The Septuagint preserves what was doubtless the original intention by translating ἵδον unambiguously as ἵδον, 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).


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. 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’. In the symbolic vision of Jn 1:51 the disciples will see the Son of Man as a ἡμέρας, 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. Muraoaka 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...

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.

place where Jacob lies with heaven (Westermann 1981:554) (note the singular – the heaven where God’s throne is located). According to Brown (1982:91), ‘whether it is as the ladder, the shekinah, the merkabah, Bethel, or the rock, the vision means that Jesus as Son of Man has become the locus of divine glory, the point of contact between heaven and earth’.

The discussion on the ladder is summed in Table 2.

Some of the more striking differences between the known Hebrew (MT) text and that of the LXX translations are the following.

The LXX translators twice left the Hebrew, הַשָּׁמָ֑יְמָה (note the singular – the heaven where God’s throne is located). The LXX contains the phrase, μη φοβοῖ, which is absent in the extant Hebrew text tradition.

Turning to the text of John 1:51, some late witnesses include ‘from now on’ (αὖ ἀρχῇ between ὤνειδεῖ) and the ώραν – probably as a ‘scribal gloss from Matt 26:64’ (Brown 1982:84).

These differences are indicated in Table 3.

Philo’s quotations from Genesis 28 are long and their text forms virtually identical to those of the extant LXX witnesses. In fact, it has often been found, in the other investigations of this project on the Torah that quotations that overlap between Philo and the NT, Philo is generally much closer to the LXX than what the NT documents are. There are only two differences to be found when the quotation in Somn. 1.3 is compared with that of LXX Genesis 28:12–15: God’s direct speech in the LXX reads Εγώ κύριος ὁ θεὸς Ἀβραὰμ, whereas Somn. 1.3 reads ἐγὼ εἰμί ὁ θεὸς Ἀβραὰμ; and the ἄνθρωπος of LXX Genesis 28:13 (ἐφ’ ἑαυτῷ) lacks in Somn. 1.3 where it only reads ἐφ’ ἑαυτῷ. The presence of both κύριος and ἄνθρωπος in the LXX at these points are repetitive within their immediate contexts, so that this might be the reason why the Philonic tradition lacks them. The quotations in Somn. 1.133 and Somn. 2.19 both stop shortly before the words of God, so that this section (which lacks κύριος and ἄνθρωπος) is not present in both cases. Important for this investigation, however, is the fact that the short section (which coincides with the part quoted by John) is identical in all three cases between Philo and the LXX. But John’s quotation, on the other hand, differs from both the LXX Genesis 28:12 and its Philonic occurrences.

John’s quotation from Genesis 28 is short and different to those of Philo and the LXX. Four major differences appear between John’s version, on the one hand, and those of the LXX and Philo, on the other hand:

• Firstly, John’s version contains an added ἀναργύρω (perfect participle active accusative masculine singular) between ώραν and καὶ τοὺς ἀγγέλους, which lacks in the LXX and Philo. All the Johannine manuscript witnesses testify to its presence, so there is hardly any doubt that it was originally included in the Johannine tradition. Given the occurrence of the term in the NT, intertextual influence from either the tradition of Peter’s vision in Acts 10:11 (the only other place in the NT where the term is linked to τὸν οὐρανόν), or a fixed form of linguistic structure for reporting on visions of this nature, might be highly likely here; and would explain the inclusion of ἀναργύρω in John’s account.
Secondly, John’s version uses the accusative plural, τοίς ἄγγελοις, 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, δέσμευθε — which now has both τοῦ φύραν καὶ τοῖς ἄγγελοις as objects of what they will see.

Thirdly, John’s version uses the present participle active accusative masculine plural form of ἀνάβασιν καὶ καταβασιν, whereas the LXX and Philo use the imperfect indicative active third person plural in the imperfect form 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 ὀψη in Jn 1:50 to the plural δέσμευθη in Jn 1:51 opens up (in typical Johannine style) a wider perspective’ (McCaffrey 1988:225–227). John’s use of δέσμευθη as the main verb, results in the construction:

δέσμευθητε τοῖς υφραν (acc) + αναμενόμενον (part)
→ τοῖς ἄγγελοις (acc) + ἀναβασιν καὶ καταβασιν (part)

Fourthly, John’s version reads εἰς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, whereas the LXX and Philo simply read ἐξ’ 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 ἐξ’ 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 (2002:1x) points out that ‘The Hebrew term, סולם (sûlûm), “ladder” is masculine; therefore τοις (bô)

18 ἐξ’ αὐτῆς | LXX ἀναμενόμενον
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. ix).

can mean either “on him” or “on it”. The LXX decides for the latter, rendering τοις as εξ’ αὐτης agreeing with κλίματος i.e. ladder. Thus, according to the LXX and Philo, the angels were ascending and descending — εξ’ αὐτης — 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. ix)

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 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.” 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 [iṭhamattat] 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

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 Somn. 1.3.1133 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 of ὡφαίτις as the main verb – which results in his addition of the participle, ἀνεῳγότα, his use of the accusative, τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, and his use of the participles, ἀνεῳγότα and καταβάινω.

Furthermore, John’s version changes ὡφαίτις to ὡφαίτις τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Riesner has drawn attention to the fact that groups of Nazorites and Ebonites densely populated the south-western part of Bethanee, 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 Mandaeans’. 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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Original Research


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