What's in a Divine Name?

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Religious Systems and Human Agency
in the Ancient Mediterranean

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Anna Angelini

Divine Names, Heavenly Bodies, and Human Visions: The Septuagint and the Transformation of Ancient Israelite Religion

Abstract: One of the major changes with regard to the transition of ancient Israelite religion into Early Judaism is the transformation of Yhwh from being the patron god of Israel, enthroned in Jerusalem, to being a universal (and invisible) deity residing in heaven. The first part of this paper surveys how the study of divine onomastic attributes has been approached by Septuagint scholarship, highlighting how this corpus crucially attests to a reconfiguration of Yhwh's power and status, but also pointing out some methodological shortcomings which emerged in past research. The second part of the paper seeks to provide a new framework for the study of divine onomastic attributes in the Septuagint. Paying attention to the relationship between divine name and embodiment, it correlates the deterritorialisation process of Yhwh, as attested by the onomastic attributes, with broader issues concerning the conditions, forms and limits of experiencing the divine presence in cultic contexts.

1 From a National Deity to the Universal God: Old and New Questions

One of the major changes featuring the transition of ancient Israelite religion into early Judaism is the transformation of Yhwh from being the patron god of Israel, enthroned in Jerusalem, into a universal deity residing in heaven.[1] By this process, Yhwh became a supranational god, who, while keeping a special relationship with Israel, was no longer associated with the land of Israel in an exclusive way. Moreover, such a representation of Yhwh contributes to his characterization as a transcendent deity, external to the world and superior to it. This process constitutes a major point

1 This study is a result of research supported by the Charles University through the program PRIMUS/20/HUM/010 "Textuality in the Second Temple Judaism: Composition, Function, and Transmission of Texts." An earlier version of it was presented at the Journée d'études "Qu'est-ce qu'un *theos* ? La Grèce ancienne en comparaison" (Paris, Collège de France, 4.11.2021). I heartfully thank all the participants for their fruitful remarks. Many thanks also go to Stephen Germany for revising my English.

Editions used in this paper: LXX = Septuagint, quoted according to Alfred Rahlfs, *Septuaginta. Id Est Vetus Testamentum Graece Iuxta LXX Interpretes*, Stuttgart, 1935; MT = Masoretic Text, quoted according to Rudolf Kittel, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, ed. quinta, Stuttgart, 1997.

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of differentiation from traditional conceptions of divinities in antiquity, where the gods, while remaining mostly invisible to human eyes, inhabit the same world as humans do and share, to an extent, a space with them. Furthermore, such a process of deterritorialization entails a broader transformation of ancient Israelite religion, ultimately allowing its survival in a diasporic context. The use of onomastic attributes for Yhwh in the Septuagint (henceforth LXX), illustrates this phenomenon well. The label LXX traditionally refers to the first translation of the Pentateuch in Greek, and by extension to the Greek translation of all the other biblical books, realized mostly and most probably in Egypt between the 3rd and the 1st century BCE.[2] This corpus offers at least four significant examples of the transformation of the nature and the status of Yhwh.

1.1 The most well-known and widely discussed example is probably the replacement of the proper name Yhwh with the title κύριος, "Lord." This equivalence is largely attested, albeit not systematically, in the main Greek codices. The study of κύριος probably overshadows every other aspect of the research on divine attributes in the Septuagint, and therefore deserves some comment. At least since the beginning of the 20th century, scholarship insisted on the momentous change induced by the choice of the Greek translators to render the tetragram with κύριος.[3] The introduction of κύριος in the biblical text was considered a paradigmatic example of the "Hellenization" of the Jewish scriptures, while at the same time would have attested to a shift in the same nature of the deity. According to Adolf Deissmann, "the Bible whose God is Yahweh is a national Bible [*die Bibel eines Volkes*]; the Bible whose God is κύριος is a universal Bible [*die Weltbibel*]."[4] The shift from Yhwh to κύριος was also interpreted as a function of the opposition between polytheism and monotheism, as stated by Charles Dodd: "By merely eliminating the name for God the LXX contributed to the definition of monotheism."[5] One of the major points of attention was the relationship between what these scholars called the "proper name" or theonym (Yhwh) and its honorific title, both in Hebrew and in Greek (*'adôn*/κύριος). In his influential and much discussed monograph devoted to this issue in 1929, Wolf Wilhelm Baudissin concluded that κύριος was a divine name chosen

2 The name *Septuaginta* derives from the number of translators who, according to the legendary account transmitted by the *Letter of Aristeas*, were sent from Jerusalem to Alexandria to translate the "law of the Jews", which allegedly means the Pentateuch. Contrary to what is affirmed in the *Letter*, the translation of the Hebrew Bible in Greek was a long and complex process which extended over almost three centuries, involved several different translators and possibly other locations than the sole Alexandria. It is highly probable that the Pentateuch was indeed translated first, but with a different translator (or group of translators) responsible for each book, and that the translation of the other books progressively followed. In modern research, the label "Septuagint" comprises also books which were composed in Greek, either in Egypt or Palestine (such as, e.g., the books of Maccabees), or for which the existence of a Hebrew version is uncertain (such as, e.g., the book of Judith).

3 Deissmann 1903; Baudissin 1929; Dodd 1935, 3–24.

4 Deissmann 1903, 174 (14).

5 Dodd 1935, 4.

intentionally by the Greek translator to replace Yhwh for theological reasons.[6] The translators were looking for a name capable of expressing what they considered to be the essence of the divine in Semitic: the absolute sovereignty of the deity and the subordinate status of the worshiper. As the title κύριος did not have specific cultic connotations in Classical Greek, it would have been, so to speak, "free" to be appropriated by the translators. Subsequent research explored related issues, such as the possibility that κύριος would have translated instead a *substitute* for the tetragram. Such a substitution would already attest to the practice of avoiding the pronunciation of Yhwh's name. Hence, Alexandrian and Palestinian "synagogal" practice would have already long been aligned with each other. Another debated issue is the consistency of the renderings of ʾEl/ʾElohim with θεός and of Yhwh with κύριος, as well as the relationship between these two different renderings and the textual transmission of the LXX. Albert Pietersma advanced the hypothesis that the form κύριος goes back to the Old Greek as a standard equivalent for Yhwh, while variations on this pattern were introduced by later scribes.[7] Some scholars also tried to detect a theological significance behind the use of one attribute or another in the Septuagint. Thus, while κύριος would represent the accessible and benevolent side of God's piety, θεός would have been used to insist on the powerful aspects of his action.[8] However, these hypotheses have been challenged by papyrological witnesses that attest to other forms for rendering the tetragram and show a much greater diversity of usages than the direct equivalence of ʾElohim with θεός and of Yhwh with κύριος.[9] Such forms, which include the Greek form IAO, paleo-Hebrew writing, dots, etc., point to a more diverse and less systematic use of equivalents for the tetragram by the Greek translators than has usually been recognized.[10] In fact, the Greek witnesses reveal a situation that does not differ much from the variety of renderings for the divine name attested among Dead Sea Scrolls. More generally, while no consensus has yet emerged to explain the presence of κύριος within the textual history of the Septuagint, the evidence at our disposal from both the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls raises the issue of the coexistence of different strategies for treating the divine name during the Hellenistic period.

1.2 A second example of a process of "deterritorialization" of Yhwh is the almost systematic disappearance from the Septuagint of divine attributes such as "rock," "stone," and "shield" (*ṣur*, *sela*ʿ, *magen*), which likely refer to the rock of the Jerusalem Temple or to the Mont Zion imagery. These attributes have been replaced by adjectives referring to

6 Baudissin 1929. The idea that the Palestinian practice of replacing Yhwh by Adonai could have been inspired by Alexandrinian usages was controversial, and is indeed unlikely. See already Cerfaux 1931.

7 Pietersma 1984.

8 The best representative of this tendency is Rösel 1991; Rösel 1998, 54–55; Rösel 2007, 420–423.

9 See, among others, Skehan 1980; Tov 2020; Shaw 2014.

10 On the different strategies to translate divine names in the Hellenistic period among Levantine communities, see Cornell in this volume.

Yhwh as an active agent, described as a refuge (καταφυγή), helper, protector (βοηθός, ἀντιλήμπτωρ), or savior (σωτήρ). The Egyptian background of such adjectives has been long noted: this vocabulary either occurs in petitions addressed to Ptolemaic kings or is attested among the attributes applied to local gods whose cult became popular in Hellenistic times, such as Isis and Serapis.[11] These observations have shown the extent to which the Septuagint vocabulary is embedded in the Hellenistic-Egyptian cultural and religious context. They have also contributed to the reconstruction of profiles for different translators. However, while scholars have addressed the significance of these semantic changes on a broad historical-religious level, their main research questions remained essentially focused on two themes. The first theme deals with the hypothesis that that the replacement of the original renderings by metaphorical designations in the Septuagint was dictated by the concern of avoiding a materialistic representation of God. In this regard, the discussion has often been related to the issue of anthropomorphism or antianthropomorphism in the Septuagint.[12] A second theme concerns the possibility that translators' choices were guided by the desire to avoid religious referents that sounded too explicitly "Greek." Answers to these questions have been sought and provided mainly via the analysis of "translation techniques": in this regard, the most detailed treatment has been offered by Staffan Olofsson in 1990.[13]

1.3 A further example attesting a tendency towards the universalization of Yhwh's worship is the translation of the attribute Zebaoth. This Hebrew form never occurs alone, but as an attribute of Yhwh (in the expressions *Yhwh ṣebaoth* or, more rarely, *'adonay yhwh ṣebaoth*, *Yhwh 'elohei ṣebaoth* and similar ones) and is prominent in the Prophets, especially in the books representing a tradition which fostered a theology of Zion and its temple, such as First and Second Isaiah, Haggai, Malachi, and Zechariah, and is also well attested in the Psalms. The attribute originated in the Temple context, and is connected with Yhwh's cult: by this name Yhwh is invoked as a military protector of Jerusalem, and the attribute is associated with his representation as a warrior.[14] In Greek, Zebaoth is rendered with παντοκράτωρ, "all powerful," in most instances,

11 Marcus 1931 and the fundamental study of Montevecchi 1961; recently Bons 2014; Aitken 2015.

12 See, e.g., Passoni dell'Acqua 1977; Olofsson 1990, 17–33; Wevers 1995, 510; McCarthy 2007, 139–140.

13 Olofsson 1990.

14 Zebaoth is absent from Genesis-Judges and rare in the Writings; it occurs sporadically in the historical books (Samuel-Kings and Chronicles). It occurs more than 100 times in the Twelve, and 61 times in Isaiah. Jeremiah is a different case: while in the Masoretic Text of Jeremiah Zebaoth occurs 82 times, only a small minority of these occurrences has a counterpart in the LXX. The discrepancy is probably due to a different *Vorlage*, as the short version of the LXX of Jeremiah might have been closer to the original Hebrew: see Olofsson 1990, 122–124 and Rofé 1991. The reference work for the study of Yhwh Zebaoth remains Mettinger 1982; see also Mettinger 1999. On the epigraphic evidence, see Lemaire 2010; for older bibliography, see Zobel 2003, 216–232. The etymology of Zebaoth is not entirely unproblematic; for a recent assessment, see Lenzo/Nihan 2022.

especially in the Book of the Twelve, while the transliteration σαβαωθ and the expression κύριος τῶν δυνάμεων, "lord of powers" also occur elsewhere (above all in Isaiah and Psalms, respectively).[15] The form παντοκράτωρ can be easily understood in a Hellenistic cultic context. Although the attribute could formally be a neologism, as the Septuagint turns out to be its most ancient attestation, the notion of an "all powerful" deity is known in Hellenistic Egypt: very similar formations are well attested, such as πάντων κρατούσηι, "powerful upon everything," which appears as a qualification of Isis.[16] Thus, the attribute παντοκράτωρ underscores the power of Yhwh not so much as a warrior but as a universal ruler and a creator. Such a shift would constitute, according to Emanuel Tov, an example of "theologically motivated exegesis" in the LXX.[17] The theological impact of what has been called an "interpretative rendering" of Zebaoth by παντοκράτωρ is further demonstrated by two different trends in the history of the Septuagint. The attribute seems to have been particularly appreciated in certain intellectual circles. For example, the translator of the book of Job adopted this rendering to translate the divine name Shadday, whose meaning is unclear, and παντοκράτωρ occurs relatively often in the books of Maccabees.[18] Yet παντοκράτωρ must have proven problematic by later redactors of the books of Kingdoms and the Twelve, who at certain points replaced it with one of the two alternative translations, either σαβαωθ or κύριος τῶν δυνάμεων, probably perceived as more appropriate because they are closer to the Hebrew.[19]

1.4 The last piece of evidence which can be included here is the presence in the LXX of attributes such as "god/lord of heaven" (οὐράνιος/ἐπουράνιος) and of the conceptually related designation of Yhwh as "the most high" (ὕψιστος). To be sure, such onomastic attributes hardly represent a LXX innovation. Ὕψιστος is the consistent translation for the Hebrew ʿElyon, "The most high," which in the Hebrew Bible can occur in a variety of combinations: either alone, or accompanied by the form ʾEl, "god," or in other constructs such as Yhwh ʿElyon or ʾElohim ʿElyon.[20] Similarly, the attribute "god/lord of the sky" is well established in semitic contexts (*bʿl šmm*, "lord of the sky"), and is attested in Phoenician sources since the 10th century BCE,[21] before

15 See Dogniez 1997.

16 See, for example, the inscription from the Serapeion of Delos, where Isis is called Μεγάλη, τῆι πάντων κρατούσηι (*RICIS* 202/0173 = *DB MAP* T#10741).

17 Tov 1999, 263.

18 Job 5:17; 8:5; 11:7; 15:25; 22:17, 25; 23:16; 27:2, 11, 13; 32:8; 33:4; 34:10, 12; 35:13; 37:22; see Witte 2011 and Angelini 2022. The attribute occurs also in 2 Macc 1:25; 3:30; 5:20; 6:26; 7:35, 38; 8:11, 18, 24; 15:8, 32; 3 Macc 2:2, 8; 5:7; 6:2, 18, 28.

19 On this, see Talshir 1987; Dogniez 1997, 22–23.

20 Despite the combination of ʿElyon with the onomastic attribute ʾEl, these designations still refer to Yhwh, as ʾEl was probably understood as a name of Yhwh in all the passages where the expression ʾEl ʿElyon occurs. See Angelini 2021, 190–191.

21 The inscription of king Yehimilk from Byblos, dating to around 950 BCE (*KAI* 4,3 = *DB MAP* S#851).

entering the Aramaic and Israelite religious traditions. Its earliest attestation in a Judeo-Aramaic context is found in the Elephantine papyri, dating back to the 5th century BCE, and it occurs in several post-exilic texts of the Hebrew Bible.[22] Such designations represent Yhwh as the supreme deity and express his power within the divine realm: they point to his role as the president of the divine assembly, enthroned on a divine mountain, and as a creator god. The designation of Yhwh as a "god of heaven" is also put in the mouth of foreigners or used to emphasize Yhwh's international character.[23] As for the use of the attribute in the LXX, two aspects are worth noting, both discussed by James Aitken.[24] First, the designation "god (or lord) of heaven" appears very frequently in later books, such as Judith, Daniel, Maccabees and Tobit, and overall increases in Hellenistic-period Jewish literature, to become a standard title for God. Second, the forms οὐράνιος / ἐπουράνιος translate different onomastic attributes in the Psalms, including Shadday.[25] Thus, we can explain the success of this divine attribute, probably among other factors, also by the fact that such a designation is well attuned with a representation of the deity whose place of residence is located in heaven. This is made explicit by a passage from 2 Maccabees (a book originally composed in Greek), where the god of Israel is called ὁ τὴν κατοικίαν ἐπουράνιον ἔχων, "he who has his dwelling in heaven."[26]

While these examples testify to the relevance of the LXX in understanding how the change in the use of divine onomastic attributes reflects a major transformation in the conceptualization of Yhwh's power, they also attest to some methodological shortcomings in LXX research on these attributes, which need to be briefly discussed before proceeding further.

2 Methodological Remarks

From the overview outlined above, at least three methodological remarks are in order, which concern (1) the conceptual and linguistical framework for approaching the study of divine onomastic attributes in the LXX; (2) the relationship between the LXX and the Hebrew Bible; and (3) the integration of LXX linguistic analysis with a broader religio-historical and cultural perspective.

2.1 The traditional approach to the study of onomastic attributes in the LXX is still based either on an overly rigid separation between the categories of theonym, title,

22 The most detailed treatment is provided by Niehr 1990, 43–60 and Niehr 2003, 185–213. On the equivalence between *B'l šmm* and Zeus *ouranios*, see Niehr 2003, 42–50; 101; 219–220; 244–245. See also Parker 2017, 122–124.

23 Ezra 1:2; 5:11, 12; 6:9, 10; 7:12, 21, 23; Neh 1:4, 5; 2:4; Ps 136:26; Dan 2:18, 19, 37, 4; 1 Macc 3:18.

24 Aitken 2007.

25 On this, see also Angelini 2022.

26 2 Macc 3:39.

and attribute/epithet, or on a confusion between them. In a similar way, the distinction between "names" and "metaphorical designations of god," sometimes adopted to avoid the problem of defining a set of terms which would fit the label of "divine name," proves unsatisfactory both from a religio-historical and from a cognitive perspective. Such distinctions have been challenged by scholars in Greek religion and recently also in West Semitic religions, notably by the MAP project.[27] Therefore, recent discussions in both fields need to be taken into account by LXX research. In this regard, the focus on the issue of a "substitute" for the name of Yhwh, going back to early 20th-century concepts, runs the risk of being anachronistic, if not even misleading. Equally problematic is the tendency of LXX scholars to treat single onomastic attributes "in isolation," so to speak, although they frequently occur in numerous and various groupings, parallelisms, or chains: all these combinations would deserve a closer analysis. To be sure, there are differences and hierarchies between divine attributes. Yet a more complex understanding of the relationship between name and attribute is needed to draw a more precise mapping of the mutual relationship between different onomastic attributes.

2.2 LXX studies tend to include the treatment of divine attributes in the Hebrew Bible mostly in terms of *Vorlage*. However, the broader issue of the continuity or discontinuity between trends detectable in the LXX and traditions represented by the Hebrew Bible is very relevant for the study of divine onomastic attributes. This holds especially true if we consider the relevance of Deuteronomistic and Second Temple traditions in promoting the process of the deterritorialization of Yhwh. According to these traditions, is not the deity who resides in the Temple, but only his name.[28] Moreover, one should ask to what extent some of the divine attributes that we find in the Greek biblical texts have already evolved in meaning within the Hebrew Bible itself. For example, it is possible that the attribute Zebaoth underwent a semantic shift already within the Hebrew Bible, as it moved from denoting the military protector of Jerusalem to serve as a designation for a universal ruler.[29] Hence, with παντοκράτωρ, the Greek translators did not introduce an entirely new concept, but transposed in Greek terms a notion which was already productive in the Hebrew text. Overall, the relationship between the onomastic attributes in the LXX and in the Hebrew Bible deserves an investigation that goes beyond the text-critical use of these texts. Exploring which tendencies detectable in the Septuagint do or do not display a continuity with a process of deterritorialization of Yhwh which is already at work in the Hebrew Bible will lead to a more historically accurate picture of this phenomenon.

27 See, e.g., Bonnet *et al.* 2018, but also Parker 2017, 1–32.

28 The reference study is Mettinger 1982. For a recent assessment of the so called "name theology", see Porzia 2022, 200–205.

29 Angelini/Nihan 2022.

2.3 Finally, the very fine linguistic analyses of the Hellenistic-Egyptian background of the LXX, of its translation techniques, and of its textual transmission still strive to articulate their findings with a broader cultural, historical, religious, and comparative perspective. As Aitken recently stated, the time is ripe to go "beyond translation techniques" and to consider other factors in appreciating the role of the divine attributes in the LXX and their impact on broader issues related to translatability and circulation of the onomastic sequences and of the specific configurations of the divine travelling with them.[30] In this regard, more could be done to put the LXX in relationship with broader phenomena in the treatment of divine names attested for the Hellenistic period, and of which the LXX often constitutes the earliest Greek attestation, such as the spreading of the cults of supreme gods, the universalism of major gods within their specific pantheon configurations, and other aspects as well.[31] As we have seen, the attempts made so far to put the use of divine onomastic attributes in the LXX in dialogue with Greek religious traditions have been mainly connected with the topic of anthropomorphism and have been read against the background of an alleged opposition between anthropomorphic and antianthropomorphic tendencies in the representation of gods. Now, such an approach has proven problematic in several regards, as it seems to be derived more from theological concerns of modern scholars than reflecting an issue raised by the ancient texts.[32] However, the question of the modes of the divine appearance points to an essential feature of the representation of the gods in antiquity, i.e., the fact that divine names and divine images are *de facto* intertwined in ancient religious experience. Therefore, their relationship does deserve attention, although it needs to be analyzed within a different methodological framework.

In what follows, I will try to outline such a framework by approaching the LXX corpus through a specific angle of enquiry. I will focus on the relationship between the development of an idea of a heavenly and "transcendent" god and the possibility for worshippers to experience his presence, tackling the issue of the connections between the change in the nature of the god as attested by onomastic attributes, the space he occupies, and his body. In this regard, it is worth observing that divine bodies and divine attributes, together with divine images, can be seen as three sides of a same coin, sharing at their core the notion of space. The change of names and the re-semantization of the onomastic attributes of Yhwh, both within the Hebrew Bible itself and in the passage from Hebrew to Greek, reflects changes that concern both the nature of the divinity and its representation. From this point of view, the trajectories of the name and of the divine image can, and indeed must, be considered in a reciprocal relationship. This point has been highlighted by the MAP project, which emphasized how "images and

30 Aitken 2021 and Aitken 2022.

31 On these phenomena, see Belayche 2005a; Belayche 2005b; Mitchell/Van Nuffelen 2010; Parker 2017, 133–153.

32 See already the remarks of Barr 1960; Orlinsky 1956; see more recently Peters 2013; Aitken 2021.

names can be grasped as parallel strategies of communication between men and gods . . . onomastic attributes and iconographic attributes can cooperate."[33] Moreover, the research conducted by the MAP team emphasized the similarity between naming processes and processes of shaping divine bodies, as both concur in "making the divine into something other in essence," or, in French terms, in the "fabrication du divin."[34] Such an angle of enquiry is even more significant for understanding the shift from ancient Israelite religion to early Judaism, where the trajectories of the divine name and the divine image drastically diverge, thus representing a quite unique phenomenon in the ancient religious landscape.

3 Heavenly Body and Cultic Presence

The connection between name and embodiment has not escaped the attention of biblical scholars. It has been the object of a recent analysis by Mark Smith, who tried to systematize the references to divine body in the Hebrew Bible by drawing a typology.[35] He identifies three types of divine body in the Hebrew Bible: an anthropomorphic body, mainly related to the representation of Yhwh in the origin stories; a luminous and supersized body, which becomes manifest in cultic contexts; and what he calls the "heavenly" or "super-heavenly" body, which has a cosmic dimension and cannot be the object of any earthly manifestation. This third type of body is of interest for our purposes here. One telling example, among many, of Yhwh's heavenly body is the prayer of King Solomon during the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem in the first book of Kings. Here the king explicitly states: "Could God really dwell on earth? Even heaven and the heaven of heaven cannot contain you! How much less this House that I have built!"[36] Solomon further specifies that when someone, even a foreigner, calls upon Yhwh from the temple, the deity "hears from heaven, the dwelling place where you live . . ."[37] Thus, in this perspective, what humans can experience directly is no longer the deity himself, but one of his avatars, either his name, or his glory, or subordinate powers, such as the angels.

This type of body, which, according to Smith, constitutes a novelty when compared to the traditional representations of the divine body in Levantine cultures, would come to predominate in post-exilic traditions, continuing in both early Judaism and early Christianity. It corresponds to a major change in the nature and status of Yhwh, and parallels in several regards the processes attested by the onomastic attrib-

33 Bonnet *et al.* 2019.
34 *Ibid.*, 214.
35 Smith 2016, 11–30.
36 1 Kgs 8:27.
37 1 Kgs 8:43.

utes in the LXX which have been discussed above. Furthermore, the relationship between the absence of a divine image and the impossibility of representing the deity in a human form is also one of the most striking features of Jewish religion when it comes to the attention of the Greeks. This is made explicit in a passage by Diodorus of Sicily, an author from the 1st century BCE who probably based this section of his *Biblioteca Historica* on the earlier work of Hecataeus of Abdera (end of the 4th century BCE). The passage seems to translate the Solomonic conception of a super-heavenly deity into Greek categories: ἄγαλμα δὲ θεῶν τὸ σύνολον οὐ κατεσκεύασε διὰ τὸ μὴ νομίζειν ἀνθρωπόμορφον εἶναι τὸν θεόν, ἀλλὰ τὸν περιέχοντα τὴν γῆν οὐρανὸν μόνον εἶναι θεὸν καὶ τῶν ὅλων κύριον. "He (=Moses) did not set any divine statue, as they (= the Jews) do not think that the god has a human form, but that only the heaven around the earth is a god and that it rules over everything."[38]

When it comes to the representation of this heavenly or super-heavenly body in the LXX, two further issues emerge. First, this shift in the nature of the god might affect his visibility by humans. To be sure, gods in antiquity are usually invisible to human eyes: invisibility is indeed one of the main signals featuring their divine nature. However, under certain conditions and in specific circumstances (which are mainly, albeit not exclusively, cultic), they might make themselves "present" to human sensory experience: to borrow a felicitous expression by Jean-Pierre Vernant, they can be "presentified."[39] Hence, one should ask to what extent the representation of Yhwh as a power who is not only universal but also "transcendent" implies the conceptualization of a divine power which has become more difficult to access, or is even inaccessible. In this regard, scholars have long noticed different tendencies concerning visions of the divine in the LXX.[40] Several passages soften or reject the very idea of seeing God. Among the most famous examples is the theophany on Mount Sinai described in the book of Exodus. In the Greek version of Exod 24:10, Moses, Aaron, and the elders no longer see the deity as in the Hebrew text (they "beheld the God of Israel," *'et 'elohêy yiśra'el*, with the particle *'et* marking the direct object), but only "the place where the god of Israel was" (καὶ εἶδον τὸν τόπον οὗ εἱστήκει ἐκεῖ ὁ θεὸς τοῦ Ισραηλ). Another example comes from Psalm 17, one of the so-called "psalms of the accused," where the speaker seeks divine justice in the temple against a false accusation.[41] The psalm concludes with the expectation to see the face of Yhwh as a sign of exculpation:[42]

> Ps 17:15 MT: As for me, in justice I shall behold (*'eḥezeh*) your face (*panîm*);
> on awaking, I will be satiated with your appearance (*temûnah*).

The Greek translation (Ps 16:15 LXX) has a slightly different text:

38 Diod. 40.3.4 = *FGrH* 264 F 6.

39 On the notion of "présentification," see Vernant 1996.

40 See Olofsson 1990; Hanson 1992; Hayward 2005; Joosten 2008; Van der Meer 2019.

41 On this group of psalms, see Schmidt 1928; Beyerlin 1970; Van der Toorn [1988] 2018.

42 *Ibid.*, 73.

ἐγὼ δὲ ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ ὀφθήσομαι τῷ προσώπῳ σου,
χορτασθήσομαι ἐν τῷ ὀφθῆναι τὴν δόξαν σου.

I will be seen by your face in justice,
I will be satisfied in the appearance of your glory.

The two changes made by the translator (the speaker "appears" before the face of the god; the speaker sees God's "glory" and not his "appearance") show that this passage has been interpreted not only in light of Deuteronomic traditions, according to which during the theophany of Sinai the Israelites had not actually seen any image of the divinity,[43] but also in the light of the Decalogue's prohibition of divine images.[44]

However, other passages preserve the reference to a divine vision where it is present in Hebrew, or even introduce it where it is absent.[45] A first example comes from Exod 25:8, where the sanctuary is no longer the place where the god resides permanently (*škn*), but the place where he manifests himself:

MT: They shall make me a sanctuary, and I will dwell (*šakanty*) among them.

LXX: καὶ ποιήσεις μοι ἁγίασμα, καὶ ὀφθήσομαι ἐν ὑμῖν.
You shall make me a sanctuary, and I will make myself seen among you.

A second example is Deut 31:15. Instead of the god who "appears" or "makes himself to be seen at the tent in a pillar of cloud" (*wayyera' yhwh ba'ohel be'ammud 'anan*), the text mentions a god who "comes down in a cloud" and "stands at the doors of the tent" (κατέβη κύριος ἐν νεφέλῃ καὶ ἔστη παρὰ τὰς θύρας).

Traditional exegesis tried to explain the avoidance of references to seeing the deity by attributing this to an alleged antianthropomorphic attitude of the LXX. However, such an explanation is unsatisfactory, as it fails to explain the opposite tendency to introduce a reference to an encounter with the deity, which is found often within the same book, as the examples from Exod 24:10 and 25:8 show.[46] Moreover, the LXX of Deut 31:15 and Exod 25:8 seem to suggest that the concern of the translators is not the possibility of seeing Yhwh in a human form. Rather, both translators insist on the fact that the deity does not reside permanently either in the tent or in the sanctuary, but "comes down" (Deut 31:15) and appears (Exod 25:8) from elsewhere.

43 Deut 4:12: "and Yhwh spoke to you from the midst of the fire: a voice spoke, and you heard it, but you saw no appearance (*temûnah*)." Compare also Exod 33:20–23, according to which none can see the face of Yhwh and survive.

44 Exod 20:4 and Deut 5:8: "you shall not make for yourselves any carved object, any appearance (*temûnah*) of that which is in the waters above, nor on the earth below, nor in the waters which are under the earth."

45 For a full list of passages, see van der Meer 2019, 9–12.

46 In both cases, the changes are due to the translator's choice and not to a different *Vorlage*. Wevers 1990, 395; Le Boulluec/Sandevoir 2004, 252; Himbaza 2005, 105–106; Perkins 2013. For a critique of the anthropomorphic approach, see recently van der Meer 2019.

A second issue directly connected with the conceptualization of Yhwh's body and Yhwh's presence among human beings concerns the alleged "spiritualization" of the deity, that is, the emergence of the notion of a god that is no longer perceptible by the senses, but the object of a purely "intellectual" experience. Related to this issue is the question of the possible influences from Greek philosophical traditions on such a development. In this regard, the appeal to "Greek influence" has lent itself to the most disparate uses. On the one hand, the so-called antianthropomorphic tendencies of the LXX are seen as a reaction to the surrounding "pagan" religion, which made extensive use of divine images. However, on the other hand, these same tendencies are explained by the influence of Greek rationalism—more specifically Platonism—on the translators.[47]

The different, and to an extent contradictory, responses offered by scholarship for both of these phenomena, and the opposite evaluation of the role assigned to Greek influences on the LXX translators, suggest that the question of the conditions, possibilities, and forms of experiencing the divine presence in the LXX would benefit from further enquiry. In what follows, I will focus on two study cases, which deal with two essential forms of Yhwh's manifestation on earth, namely, his "face" and his "spirits."

4 Seeing the Face of God in the Greek Psalter

The first study case focuses on the translation of the invocation made to Yhwh to "make his face shine" upon the worshipper in the book of Psalms. This expression is significant, as it does not simply belong to the register of poetic metaphor but presupposes a cultic setting.[48] This is confirmed by its first occurrence in the Hebrew Bible, in the Priestly blessing on Aaron in Num 6:24–26:

> 24 May Yhwh bless you and protect you
> 25 May Yhwh make his face shine upon you (*ya'er yhwh panaw 'eleka*) and give you his grace
> 26 May Yhwh raise his face upon you (*yiśśa' yhwh panaw 'eleka*) and give you peace.

The presence of a very similar text on one of the amulets found in a funerary chamber at Ketef Hinnom, a necropolis near Jerusalem, dating to the 6th c. BCE, highlights the ritual value of this text. In the book of Numbers, the passage is translated into Greek as follows:

24 Εὐλογήσαι σε κύριος καὶ φυλάξαι σε, 25 *ἐπιφάναι κύριος τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ σὲ* καὶ ἐλεήσαι σε,	24 May the Lord bless you and protect you 25 *May the Lord show his face upon you* and be merciful to you,

47 In this regard, one can compare, among other examples, Passoni dell'Acqua 1977, 451: "Al razionalismo di stampo greco un dio roccia . . . provocava un effetto di ripulsa . . . gli avvenimenti storici che avevano suggerito quelle immagini erano ormai sfocati nel tempo, visti con distacco e mentalità razionale". Compare also Hanson 1992, 566; Schwartz 2010, 209.

48 See, among others, Smith 1988; Hartenstein 2008, 177–204.

24 Εὐλογήσαι σε κύριος καὶ φυλάξαι σε, 26 ἐπάραι κύριος τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ σὲ καὶ δῴη σοι εἰρήνην.	24 May the Lord bless you and protect you 26 May the Lord raise his face upon you and give you peace.

The wish for the face of Yhwh to shine upon the worshipper (*ya'er yhwh panaw 'eleka*) is rendered in Greek by the expression ἐπιφάναι κύριος τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ σὲ, "May the Lord show his face/his countenance upon you." This expression, or very similar ones, occur also several times in the Psalms, as the following table shows:

Tab. 1: The shining face of Yhwh in the Psalms.

Hebrew	Greek
Ps 4:7	
רבים אמרים מי יראנו טוב נסה עלינו אור פניך יהוה Many say: "who will show us prosperity?" Raise upon us the light of your face, Yhwh!	πολλοὶ λέγουσιν Τίς δείξει ἡμῖν τὰ ἀγαθά; ἐσημειώθη ἐφ᾽ ἡμᾶς τὸ φῶς τοῦ προσώπου σου, κύριε.
Ps 30 (MT 31): 17	
אירה פניך על עבדך הושיעני בחסדך *Make your face shine* on your servant, save me by your faithfulness!	*ἐπίφανον τὸ πρόσωπόν σου* ἐπὶ τὸν δοῦλόν σου, σῶσόν με ἐν τῷ ἐλέει σου.
Ps 43 (MT 44): 4	
כי לא בחרבם ירשו ארץ וזרועם לא הושיעה למו כי ימינך וזרועך ואור פניך כי רציתם It was not by their sword that they possessed the land, not their arm saved them, but your hand and your arm, and the light of your face, as you were favorable to them.	Οὐ γὰρ ἐν τῇ ῥομφαίᾳ αὐτῶν ἐκληρονόμησαν γῆν, καὶ ὁ βραχίων αὐτῶν οὐκ ἔσωσεν αὐτούς, ἀλλ᾽ ἡ δεξιά σου καὶ ὁ βραχίων σου καὶ ὁ φωτισμὸς τοῦ προσώπου σου, ὅτι εὐδόκησας ἐν αὐτοῖς.
Ps 66 (MT 67):2	
אלהים יחננו ויברכנו יאר פניו אתנו May God be gracious to us and bless us! *May he make his face shine* among us!	ὁ θεὸς οἰκτιρήσαι ἡμᾶς καὶ εὐλογήσαι ἡμᾶς, *ἐπιφάναι τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ* ἐφ᾽ ἡμᾶς.

Tab. 1 (continued)

Hebrew	Greek
Ps 79 (MT 80): 2, 4, 8, 20	
[2]ישׁב הכרובים הופיעה	[2]ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τῶν χερουβιν, ἐμφάνηθι.
[4]אלהים השׁיבנו	[4]ὁ θεός, ἐπίστρεψον ἡμᾶς
והאר פניך ונושׁעה	καὶ *ἐπίφανον τὸ πρόσωπόν σου*, καὶ σωθησόμεθα.
[8]אלהים צבאות השׁיבנו	[8]κύριε ὁ θεὸς τῶν δυνάμεων, ἐπίστρεψον ἡμᾶς
והאר פניך ונושׁעה	καὶ *ἐπίφανον τὸ πρόσωπόν σου*, καὶ σωθησόμεθα διάψαλμα.
[20]יהוה אלהים צבאות השׁיבנו	[20]κύριε ὁ θεὸς τῶν δυνάμεων, ἐπίστρεψον ἡμᾶς
האר פניך ונושׁעה	καὶ *ἐπίφανον τὸ πρόσωπόν σου*, καὶ σωθησόμεθα.
2 You who are enthroned on the cherubim, shine forth!	
4 ’Elohim, bring us back!	
Make your face shine and we will be saved.	
8 ’Elohim Zebaoth, bring us back!	
Make your face shine and we will be saved.	
20 Yhwh, ’Elohim Zebaoth, bring us back!	
Make your face shine and we will be saved.	

Apart from Psalm 66, which is a general request for blessings, in the other psalms the speaker asks for Yhwh to “make his face shine,” i.e., to intervene and save him in a situation of mortal danger. Moreover, Psalms 66 and 79 imply a military context, or at least refer to the power of Yhwh as a warrior (as the attribute Yhwh ’Elohim Zebaoth/κύριε ὁ θεὸς τῶν δυνάμεων suggests). In Ps 79, where this appeal to Yhwh occurs repeatedly and structures the whole text, the god is asked to “return and look down from the sky” (v. 15).

When the light emanating from Yhwh’s face or presence is expressed in Hebrew by the Hiphil form of the verb *’wr*, “to make shine,” “to spread light,” + the object *panîm*, “face” or “countenance,” such an expression is rendered in Greek by the strong aorist of the verb ἐπιφαίνω + the object πρόσωπον. Both Num 6:24–26 and the Psalms indicate that this luminous aspect of Yhwh’s face is not a pure ornament, but acts as an instrument of blessing and salvation, together with his arm (see especially Ps 44:4 LXX = 43:4 MT): in cognitive terms, this is a strong conceptual metonymy to express the manifestation of Yhwh’s power. Moreover, such a metonymy is well rooted in the Levantine religious context, where being “the face of a x-male-god” might be an attri-

bute of the goddess in divine couples.[49] Thus, the Greek translators did not resort to a literal rendering, such as the verb φωτίζω, which one could expect as an equivalent for *'wr* and which occurs elsewhere in the LXX, mostly in non-cultic contexts.[50] Rather, they reinterpreted the luminous countenance of Yhwh by the Greek language of divine epiphany conveyed by ἐπιφαίνω.[51]

The use of the verb ἐπιφαίνω to describe a divine appearance in literary sources is unattested in Greek before the late Hellenistic period, and in this regard the LXX represents a significant piece of evidence. Very few antecedents occur in inscriptions from the Hellenistic period onwards. As has been noted, since this period the number of records of divine apparitions in inscriptions increases, both in Greece and Asia Minor.[52] The deity usually appears to provide help in contexts of crisis or danger, but also to defend his or her goods, such as the temple. Among the most famous examples, one can think of Athena rescuing her sanctuary in Lindos[53] or of Zeus Panamaros defending his sanctuary in Stratonikeia.[54] Since at least the 3rd c. BCE, such divine interventions are recorded under the rubrics of "ἐπιφάνειαι": an inscription from Kos commemorating the intervention of Apollo in Delphi which put the Galates on the run, dating to 278 BCE, is probably the most ancient attestation of ἐπιφάνεια with this meaning.[55] Yet the occurrence of the verb ἐπιφαίνω is rarer. It is found in an inscription from Epidaurus dating to the second half of the 4th c. BCE, where Asklepios appears in a dream to an ill man who had not trusted the healing power of the god,[56] and in the record of the reorganization of the cult for Artemis in Magnesia-on-the-Maeander, following an apparition of the goddess in 221–220 BCE.[57]

Similar remarks hold true for the literary uses of the noun ἐπιφάνεια: in the sense of "divine apparition," it occurs in the LXX before being employed by later liter-

49 See., e.g., Tanit "face of Baʿal" in Punic inscriptions from the *tophet* of Carthage. On the relationship between name and face in ancient Levant and in the Hebrew Bible, see Porzia 2022.

50 See, e.g., Ps 118 (MT 119):30; Qoh 8:1; Mic 7:8; Isa 60:19. The equivalence between *'wr* + *panîm* and ἐπιφαίνω + πρόσωπον also occurs in Ps 118 (MT 119):135. However, as this psalm is a late wisdom composition which did not have a cultic setting, I did not include it in Tab. 1.

51 Accordingly, the form ἐπέφανεν also occurs as an equivalence for the verb *zrḥ*, "to shine," in the theophany of Deut 33:2.

52 On this phenomenon, see the remarks of Paul 2012, 246–248.

53 *I.Lindos* 2, section D; Higbie 2003, 43–49.

54 *I. Stratonikeia* 10 (*DB MAP* S #5775). See recently Belayche 2009 and Belayche in this volume.

55 *Syll.*[3] 398. On the history of the term ἐπιφάνεια and on ancient epiphanies, see Petridou 2016. On epiphanies in Hellenistic times, see also Versnel 1987; Dunand 2002.

56 *IG* IV 951 = *IG* IV[2] I, 121: ἐδόκει ὑπὸ τῶι ναῶι ἀστραγαλίζον[τ]ος αὐτοῦ καὶ μέλλοντος βάλλειν τῶι ἀστραγάλωι, ἐπιφανέντα [τ]ὸν θεὸν ἐφαλέσθαι ἐπὶ τὰν χῆρα καὶ ἐκτεῖναί οὐ τοὺς δακτύλλους.

57 *I.Magnesia* 16, ll. 4–10 (last edition by Rigsby 1996, 179–190, n. 66, DB *MAP* S #9469): [ὑστε]ρον ἐπιφαινομένης αὐτοῖς Ἀρτέμι[δο]ς Λε[υκοφρυηνῆς ἔπεμ][ψαν]ν Ἀγάριστον χρηστηριάζει τάδε πρὸς τὴν ἐρώ[τησιν αὐτῶν·] [λώ]ϊον εἶμεν καὶ ἄμεινον τοῖς σε[β]ομένοις Ἀπ[όλλωνα Πύθι][ο]ν καὶ Ἄρτεμιν Λευκοφρυηνὴν καὶ τὰ[μ] π[όλιν καὶ τὰν] [χ]ώραν τὰμ Μαγνήτων τῶν ἐπὶ Μαιάνδρ[ο]υ [ἱερὰν καὶ ἄσυ][λ]ον νομιζόντοις. The inscription dates to 207–203 BCE.

ary sources, such as Diodorus or Polybius. The noun is well attested in the second book of Maccabees, composed in Greek in the 2nd c. BCE. The best example is the epiphany that appears to Heliodorus, the prime minister of king Seleucus, who was about to confiscate the treasury of the Jerusalem temple. In this situation, Yhwh, described as "the ruler of the spirits and of all powers," manifested himself through his powers: he entered the temple in the form of a warrior with golden armor, mounted on a horse, and surrounded by two young men, handsome and beautifully dressed. They attacked Heliodorus and left him almost dead at the entrance of the treasury:

> αὐτόθι δὲ αὐτοῦ σὺν τοῖς δορυφόροις κατὰ τὸ γαζοφυλάκιον ἤδη παρόντος ὁ τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης ἐξουσίας δυνάστης ἐπιφάνειαν μεγάλην ἐποίησεν ὥστε πάντας τοὺς κατατολμήσαντας συνελθεῖν καταπλαγέντας τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ δύναμιν εἰς ἔκλυσιν καὶ δειλίαν τραπῆναι.
>
> However, just as he with his bodyguards was already near the treasury, the ruler of spirits and of every authority made a great epiphany, so that those who had insolently come along, panic-stricken at the power of God, were changed to weak-kneed cowardice.[58]

Such a "divine energy" (θεία ἐνέργεια, v. 29) produced the immediate effect of converting Heliodorus to Judaism. The occurrence in this passage of the attribute ὁ τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης ἐξουσίας δυνάστης, "the ruler of spirits and of every authority/power," brings us directly to our second study case, focusing on the use of the attribute "ruler/lord of spirits" in the LXX. I will turn to the analysis of this expression before outlining some general conclusions.

5 A Spiritual Religion or a Religion Full of Spirits? The Attribute "Lord of Spirits"

The designation of Yhwh as a ruler or lord of spirits, and of heavenly powers more generally, fits well his representation as a celestial deity. The expression ὁ τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης ἐξουσίας δυνάστης in 2 Macc 3:24 has two antecedents in the LXX, both found in the book of Numbers, where the similar form θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων occurs. This attribute is the result of a process of resemantization of the Hebrew expression *'elohei harûḥot ləkol baśar*, "god of spirits for all flesh." Its first occurrence is in the appeal made by Moses and Aaron to Yhwh during Korah's rebellion (Num 16:22). The expression occurs again later in the book, when Joshua is designated as Moses' successor (Num 27:16).

In both cases the attribute refers to human beings. As Nathan MacDonald has convincingly argued, this is not meant to express a dualism between body and soul, but rather to underscore the fact that Yhwh presides over the lives of all humans and can

58 2 Macc 3:24 (transl. Doran).

decide their fate.[59] A first interpretation of the attribute is already found in the LXX of Num 16:22, which translates: "god of spirits *and* all flesh" (θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων *καὶ* πάσης σαρκός). It is possible that the translator interpreted the Hebrew attribute against the background of the distinction between "soul" and "body" that was emerging in the anthropology of the time. However, it remains difficult to understand the significance of such a dichotomy in this context. Therefore, we cannot exclude the possibility that the πνεύματα mentioned here are heavenly spirits, the *ruḥot* indigenous to ancient Israelite religion.[60] Σάρξ would then indicate human beings, or the living world as a whole, as occurs elsewhere in the Pentateuch, particularly in the LXX of Numbers.[61] The use of an onomastic attribute that emphasizes Yhwh's absolute sovereignty over the heavenly and the earthly spheres makes sense in the context of Numbers 16, where Moses' prayer aims at preventing the divine wrath from annihilating the entire community. It is also appropriate in chapter 27, where Moses asks Yhwh to appoint a leader able to act as an agent of the god and to guide the people into the land.

As for the attribute ὁ τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης ἐξουσίας δυνάστης in 2 Macc 3:24, it seems beyond doubt that πνεύματα here refer to heavenly powers with a military function, namely, to angelic powers: as discussed above, the military context is here explicit. In the Second Temple literature the attribute "Lord of the Spirits" becomes very popular especially in the books of Enoch (where it occurs more than one hundred times).[62] It also occurs in the book of Jubilees (10:3), the Dead Sea Scrolls (1QH 18 [10],8; 1QM 12, 7–8), and the New Testament in a slightly different form.[63] Moreover, it is found in two epitaphs from the 2nd century BCE from Rheneia, which served as a cemetery for the island of Delos. The presence of such an attribute in a funerary context attests to the power that must have been associated with it. The first inscription, engraved with the same text on both sides of a tombstone, is written for a girl named Heraclea. Two open and raised hands are engraved above the text. A second inscription with a very similar text is written for another girl, Martine, which makes a total

59 MacDonald 2013, 101.

60 For further on these notions, see Angelini 2021, 225–266.

61 See Num 18:15 and Gen 2:24; 6:12.

62 See Black 1985, p. 189–191, according to which the Ethiopic form could be an equivalent for the expression "Lord of armies" (κύριος τῶν δυνάμεων/*yhwh ṣəbā'ôt*); Chialà 1997, 142–144; Nickelsburg 2001, 41, 91, and the contribution of Ben-Dov in this volume. Unlike him (692–693), I argue for a different meaning of the attribute in the Greek sources compared to the Hebrew Bible, especially in the LXX of Numbers and in the Rheneia inscription. For a different interpretation, see also Litvinau 2022, 405–408. He, however, does not take sufficiently into account the complexity of the Septuagint traditions on the spirits (see Angelini 2021, 225–266).

63 Rev 22:6 ("The Lord, god of spirits") and Heb 12:9 ("father of spirits").

of three almost identical texts.[64] The numerous references to the LXX as well as the presence of a Jewish (or Samaritan) group in Delos, well documented by epigraphic evidence, confirm the Jewish (or Samaritan) origin of the inscription. The epitaphs invoke the vengeance of the deity for the untimely death of two young girls and wish for the punishment of the responsible party. The first inscription reads:

ἐπικαλοῦμαι καὶ ἀξιῶ τὸν θεὸν τὸν
ὕψιστον *τὸν κύριον τῶν πνευμάτων*
καὶ πάσης σαρκός, ἐπὶ τοὺς δόλωι φονεύ-
σαντας ἢ φαρμακεύσαντας τὴν τα-
λαίπωρον ἄωρον Ἡράκλεαν, ἐχχέαν-
τας αὐτῆς τὸ ἀναίτιον αἷμα ἀδί-
κως, ἵνα οὕτως γένηται τοῖς φονεύ-
σασιν αὐτὴν ἢ φαρμακεύσασιν καὶ
τοῖς τέκνοις αὐτῶν, *Κύριε ὁ πάντα ἐ-*
φορῶν καὶ οἱ ἄνγελοι θεοῦ, ᾧ πᾶσα ψυ-
χὴ ἐν τῇ σήμερον ἡμέραι ταπεινοῦτα[ι]
μεθ' ἱκετείας ἵνα ἐγδικήσῃς τὸ αἷμα τὸ ἀ-
ναίτιον ζητήσεις καὶ τὴν ταχίστην.

I call upon and entreat God
the Most High, *the Lord of the spirits*
and of all flesh, against those who have treacherously
murdered or poisoned the wretched
Heraclea, who died untimely, and who have
unjustly shed her innocent blood,
that the same may happen to them who have
murdered or poisoned her and
to their children, *O Lord, you who see*
everything, and you, angels of God, for whom every
soul humbles itself on the present day
with supplication, that you may avenge and requite
her innocent blood as soon as possible.[65]

The text contains several biblical quotations, while at the same time drawing on the language of curses. The deity is called as the "Most High," "Lord of the spirits and of all flesh" (l. 1–3), and "he who sees all" (l. 9–10). That these spirits are to be identified with angels is confirmed by lines 10–11, where the ἄνγελοι θεοῦ are invoked to enact vengeance against the guilty. While the representation of angels as the army of the deity is common in the Hebrew Bible, it should be noted that in this context the angelic powers are invoked as avengers for the ἄωρον. The term refers to the daughters

64 *I.Délos*. 2532 = *DB MAP* T#13643, #13738, #13739. See also Gager 1992, no. 87; *I.Jud. Orientis* I, 70 and 71. For a commentary, see Deissmann 1909, 315–326; Stuckenbruck 1995, 183–185; van der Horst/Newman 2008, 137–143; van der Horst 2013, 369.

65 Transl. van der Horst/Newman 2008.

who have died prematurely, who demand blood vengeance, and who may themselves be represented as demons. The insertion of this reference, combined with the depiction of the hands raised upward in a gesture of invocation, thus contributes to connoting these angelic spirits with an almost demonic aura.

6 Conclusions

The study of the divine onomastic attributes in the LXX confirms the central role played by the Greek translation in promoting the process of the deterritorialization of Yhwh and the universalization of his sovereignty. The god of the LXX is a heavenly power who does not reside permanently among humans, as passages such as Exod 25:8 and Deut 31:15 show. In this regard, the LXX extends both Deuteronomistic traditions and the traditions on the prohibition of the divine image found in the Hebrew Bible. Moreover, in the case of the book of Exodus, the translator had to face the difficulty of having conflictual versions of similar episodes in the Hebrew text, such as the Sinai theophanies in chapters 24 and 33, which he tried to harmonize by eliminating the direct reference to divine vision from Exod 24:10.

The weight of such traditions and their impact on the religious sensibility of Jews in Hellenistic times, as is reflected in the activity of the translators and the authors of the LXX, raise issues related to the "accessibility" of the god and of his alleged "spiritualization." However, the deity in the LXX is not yet represented as a disembodied entity, or as a god which can only be the object of a purely intellectual knowledge. In this regard, the two study cases analyzed here allow for further remarks on these issues. (1) Prohibition of the image does not necessarily mean the impossibility of seeing the deity. The study of the expression "make your face shine," rendered in Greek by ἐπιφαίνω + πρόσωπον in the Psalter, shows that in cultic contexts the vision of the god remains possible, included through the medium of his "face/countenance," and this despite the fact that such a medium had become problematic for *some* Jewish traditions. (2) However, the Greek expression "showing the face" does not have to be understood within the context of an opposition between an anthropomorphic or antianthropomorphic representation of Yhwh. Rather, it must be read against the background of the Greek language for divine epiphany. Neither the verb ἐπιφαίνω nor the noun ἐπιφάνεια put the accent on the *form* in which the deity become visible to humans, but signal the process by which the god assures his presence among humans through the *manifestation of his power*. By the choice of such equivalents, the translators transposed in Greek categories the same phenomenon which is described in the Hebrew Bible by the reference to Yhwh's "shining face." In this regard, both the Hebrew and the Greek expressions point to the complexity of the divine vision as a religious experience which cannot be reduced to the anthropomorphic appearance of the deity, nor read exclusively through these lenses.

(3) Moreover, the LXX turns out to be one of the earliest and richest sources for the study of the vocabulary of divine epiphany and for the indigenous uses of the notion of ἐπιφάνεια and of the verb ἐπιφαίνω to refer to a divine apparition in the Hellenistic period. In a recent article, Michaël van der Meer[66] emphasized the need to situate the study of visions of the divine in the LXX within the religious and historical context of the Hellenistic world. In this regard, the present study not only confirms that the LXX is embedded in such a context but also highlights how it contributed to the development of Hellenistic religious traditions.

(4) Furthermore, in both of the case studies considered here, it is difficult to identify any influence of so-called Greek "rationalism," and even less of Platonism, on the translators. Yet the study of the attribute "Lord of spirits" does reveal a spiritualization of the god, but one of a different kind. It points towards (5) a conflation between the notion of spirits and that of angels and towards the representation of Yhwh as the ruler of such powers, a notion which is conveyed by the attribute θεὸς τῶν πνευμάτων and by similar onomastic attributes found in the LXX of Numbers, in the book of Maccabees, and in other literature from the Second Temple period. The characterization of angels as "pneumatic" beings is to be contextualized within the changes that the notion of angel undergoes from the postexilic period, and especially in the Second Temple traditions.[67] The pneumatic nature that is explicitly attributed to the angels turns out to be one of the most significant and long-lasting novelties brought by the Greek translation to the religious landscape of the Hellenistic period. Accordingly, (6) on the one hand the spreading of the attribute "Lord of spirits" contributes further to the portrayal of Yhwh as standing at the top of the celestial sphere, whose hierarchy will be progressively designed by later Jewish and Christian traditions. On the other hand, the long form of the attribute, "Lord of spirits and all flesh," specifies his absolute power over the heavenly and the human realm.

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66 Van der Meer 2019.

67 On this, see further Angelini 2021, 273–281.

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