AOSIS

Meditatio Septuaginta: Torah recitation as a spiritual discipline

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There is evidence that the practice of meditative reading was cultivated by Hellenistic Jews as a discipline analogous to the spiritual exercises of the philosophical schools. The present study traces (1) the Deuteronomic antecedents of this practice, (2) its reconfiguration in the Torah Psalms, and (3) finally its expression in Greco-Jewish translation, with special reference to the Greek Psalter. Taking its cue from the work of Pierre Hadot, it situates this development within the larger matrix of Hellenistic philosophical discourse. The philological focus of the study is the use of the Hebrew verb I הגה Qal in contexts where Torah study is thematic and its rendering by μελετάω in the Septuagint. To frame the lexical analysis, it draws on the slot-filler model pioneered by Charles Fillmore.

Contribution: This article situates a key Greco-Jewish translation with reference to both its Deuteronomic antecedents and to practices cultivated within the philosophical schools of the Hellenistic period. The analysis demonstrates the relevance of Frame Semantics to philological investigation.

Keywords: Septuagint; Philo; Hellenistic philosophy; spiritual exercises; meditation; lexical semantics.

While it is now commonplace to characterise the intellectual culture of the Hellenistic period with reference to the diversity of its competing traditions, Hadot (2002:270) has drawn renewed attention to their common praxis. On his view, 'Chaque école représentera donc une forme de vie, spécifiée par un idéal de sagesse'. Each in turn cultivated exercises designed to ensure progress towards that ideal. Although analogous to athletic training in important respects, such exercises aimed at the complete transformation of the subject. Hence, at the risk of anachronism, Hadot (2002:20) refers to them as 'exercices spirituels'. The burden of his argument is that they were a central preoccupation of the period. To illustrate their scope, Hadot looks to the Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria (c. 20–50 CE), who offered a succinct overview of the subject in the form of two lists (Hadot 2002:25).[1] These lists differ in various respects, and there is no indication that Philo was setting out a comprehensive programme (Uusimäki 2018:278). Yet, on Hadot's reading, they provide a unique panorama of Stoico-Platonic inspired therapeutics (ἄσκησις) (Hadot 2002:25).

Philo's lists no doubt ring the changes on a number of conventional Stoic precepts (Hadot 2002: 26–38). There are, however, emphases peculiar to the Jewish philosopher, and while this does not militate against Hadot's interpretation, it does raise the possibility that Philo took into account practices known to him from Greco-Jewish circles. Of particular interest is the inclusion of ἀνάγνωσις in both lists. Uusimäki (2018:280) notes that the practice of spiritual reading – the discipline of reciting texts with a view to moral progress – is seldom discussed prior to the first century CE.[2] Philo's explicit reference to reading in the context of therapeutics may well testify to a distinctively Jewish exercise (Uusimäki 2018:280).[3]

To the extent that ἀνάγνωσις is significant, its collocation with the word μελέτη in *Legum allegoriarum* merits close attention. Hadot (2002:29) observes that within Greek philosophical discourse the latter often distinguishes exercises which aim at the internalisation of some principle through mental or vocal rehearsal. Uusimäki (2018:281) thus glosses Philo's use of μελέται as 'meditative

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1.Rather than using a philosopher as his exemplar, Philo invokes the figure of Jacob. In *Quis rerum divinarum heres sit*, 252–253 (Loeb 412–413), Philo contrasts the patriarch's life with that of Esau. The former is distinguished by the spiritual practices he cultivates, including ζήτησις, σκέψις, ἀνάγνωσις, ἀκρόασις, προσοχή, ἐγκράτεια and ἐξαδιαφόρησις τῶν ἀδιαφόρων. In *Legum allegoriarum*, 3.18–19 (Loeb 312–313), Philo identifies Jacob's moral progress as a form of mental training comprising ἀναγνώσεις, μελέται, θεραπεῖαι, τῶν καλῶν μνῆμαι, ἐγκράτεια and τῶν καθηκόντων ἐνέργειαι.

2.This may be an accident of the extant sources. See Plutarch, *De tuenda*, 130c9, who refers to the daily exercise of reading aloud.

3.See Philo, *Contemplative*, 25–32.

Note: Special Collection: Historical Thought and Source Interpretation, sub-edited by Johann Cook (Stellenbosch University).

exercises' in order to capture both the semantics of the term and the transformative purpose of the practice it denotes. The idea of meditation must, however, be contextualised. Hadot cautions that Greco-Roman practice differs in two respects from the modern conception. Firstly, it involves the memorisation and assimilation of the fundamental dogmas and rules of the school; secondly, it is a matter of having these rules ready to hand in order to conduct oneself appropriately at all times (Hadot 2002:29; see also Foucault 2005:355–370).

For a Greco-Jewish reader, Philo's collocation of ἀνάγνωσις and μελέται would likely have evoked the rules of life specific to their tradition, namely those of the Mosaic law. The question arises therefore as to whether this points to an actual discipline of spiritual reading. Certainly μελέτη came to signify such a practice within certain streams of early Christianity. It is thus conceivable, as Uusimäki (2018:280) suggests, that Philo would have included meditative exercises on the Jewish scriptures under μελέται. As I intend to show, this practice is not only conceivable, but indirectly attested in the reception history of these very writings, and, in particular, their translation into Greek.

The present study traces the trajectory of this practice through (1) its Deuteronomic antecedents, (2) its reconfiguration in the Torah Psalms, and (3) finally its expression in Greco-Jewish translation, with special reference to the Greek Psalter. Taking my cue from the work of Hadot, I shall try to situate this development within the larger matrix of Hellenistic philosophical discourse. The evidence is linguistic. I shall look primarily at the use of the Hebrew verb I הגה Qal in contexts where Torah study is thematic and then consider its rendering by μελετάω in the Septuagint. Conceptual distinctions are inferred from regularities in the word use of authors, redactors and translators, in the hope of reconstructing an intellectual history.

To motivate the lexical analysis, I shall draw informally on a model pioneered by Charles Fillmore. Fillmore's master insight was that word use is bound up with the structure of slot-filler categories or frames (Fillmore & Baker 2010). Such frames are defined by recurrent events, routines or states of affairs. They are experientially based and context-restricted, but can be labelled by superordinate terms (Sheng & Lam 2015). For instance, 'eggs, cereal and milk' are *foods one has for breakfast*. This model may be distinguished from semantic feature analysis. While both play a complementary role in mature human cognition, the slot-filler model is arguably primary (Nelson 1988). Its heuristic value for philological investigation has been amply demonstrated (see Peters 2016; Shead 2011; Van Wolde 2009).

Deuteronomic antecedents

Weinfeld (1992:171) has argued persuasively that the very elements, which make texts such as the Torah Psalms nomistic are already found in Deuteronomy, where the idea of a written Torah as Israel's guide is a dominant theme.

A copy of the law shall be written for the king in the presence of the Levitical priests, which he is to read all his days, and thereby learn the fear of YHWH (Deut 17:19).[4] The fear motif is a conventional feature of Jewish Wisdom.[5] Yet there is a salient difference. Whereas in Wisdom literature the reference is to general moral behaviour, in Deuteronomy it refers specifically to covenantal law (Weinfeld 1992:279).[6] What further distinguishes the intellectual milieu of Deuteronomy is the emphasis on a specific practice, that is, reading, וקרא בו כל ימי חייו. As God's Torah is written in a book (ספר), the fear of YHWH is cultivated by studying the text (Weinfeld 1992:280).[7]

This fundamental idea is, in turn, a characteristic theme of the Deuteronomistic historian (DH). So much is evident in the redaction of traditional materials. Thus, DH introduces the Torah commandment to Joshua in the context of the conquest (Jos 1:7–8). No less than four motifs in v. 7 associate the text with Deuteronomy and DH and mark it as redactive.[8] Weinfeld (1992:5) points out that whereas the idiom חזק ואמץ occurs in Deuteronomy only in the context of the conquest of the land, here it is employed with reference to the general observance of Torah.[9] The nomistic element is certainly to the fore and Torah is defined precisely (Butler 1983:13).[10]

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the interpolation at Joshua 1:7–8, however, is its idiosyncratic use of the verb I הגה (Qal) in v. 8: והגית בו יומם ולילה. While the semantics of the term are somewhat uncertain, it collocates here with ספר (antecedent to the phrasal head in בו), which serves to cue the relevant concept. Some form of literate practice is in view. Lexicographers are divided, however, as to whether it is the act of reading (see HALOT I הגה Qal. 2. c. *to read in an undertone*), or sustained reflection (see DCH I הגה Qal, 4. *meditate* [*on*]). There are considerations in favour of both interpretations.

Across a range of contexts I הגה is used to evoke the frame *vocalisation*, that is, a situation in which sounds are produced by animate entities by means of their vocal tracts.[11] This would appear to have been its prototypical use. Subjects include bears, doves and human beings; it was an apt usage for ventriloquists. At Joshua 1:7–8, the most economical explanation is that it denotes the iteration of vocal sounds.

4. For further instances of the fear motif, see Deuteronomy 4:10; 5:25; 14:23; 31:13. Compare the DH verses in Joshua 4:24; 1 Kings 8:40 and Jeremiah 32.

5. Thus, at Psalms 34:12 the fear of God is to be taught, and at Proverbs 23:17 it is the guiding principle in a man's life.

6. See Deuteronomy 4:10; 5:25; 14:23: 17:19; 31:13.

7. See also Deuteronomy 31:12–13.

8. For חזק ואמץ, compare Deuteronomy 3:28; 31:6, 7, 23; in DH, Joshua 1:9, 18; 10:25. For לשמר לעשות ככל התורה, compare Deuteronomy 17:19; 28:58; 29:28; 31:12; 32:46; in DH, Joshua 23:6. For סור ימין ושמאל, compare Deuteronomy 5:29; 17:20; 28:14; in DH, Joshua 23:6; 2 Kings 22:2. Lastly for תשכיל בכל אשר תלך, compare Deuteronomy 29:8; in DH, 1 Kings 2:3.

9. A similar use of the idiom occurs in DH's interpretation of David's testament to Solomon (1 Kings 2:1-4). Whereas the original injunction וחזקת והיית לאיש (v. 2) likely referred to dynastic vengeance, DH relates it to the observance of Torah (v. 3).

10. The code given to Moses after the defeat of Sihon and Og (Deut 1:1–5).

11. HALOT I הגה Qal, 1. animals: (a) *to coo* (Is 38:14; 5911), (b) *to growl* (Is 31:4); 2. human beings: (1) *to utter a sound* (Ps 115:7); (2) *to moan* (Is 16:7; Jr 48:31).

On the other hand, one wonders why the interpolator did not simply use קרא. This raises the question of whether something else, or at least something more, is implied by his word choice.

Across another set of contexts where a human being is vocalising, I הגה evokes the category of *expression*, that is, a situation in which a communicator publically conveys some content to an audience.[12] The construal of Joshua 1:7–8 along these lines is, however, hardly viable, as the interpolation envisions a solitary practice. There is no indication of public recitation or pedagogy. Joshua shall read the book of Moses regularly – that is, to himself – so that he will be able to govern accordingly (לעשות ככל הכתוב בו).

Finally, I הגה is used in situations involving vocalisation where, to paraphrase Sarna (1993:38), the recitative aspect is predominant. We might refer to this concept as *intoning*, that is, a situation in which an individual recites a text with little rise and fall of pitch. Typically the act is private and the context is devotional. The usage is a feature of Wisdom discourse. What it evokes, it would seem, is some form of meditative recitation. Thus, at Psalms 6:36 and 143:5 it collocates with a cognitive verb (זכר) with reference to the acts of YHWH. While calling these to mind does not necessarily involve muted speech, it is aptly figured by it. At Isaiah 33:18 and Proverbs 15:28, the grammatical subject of the verb is לב, a conventional figure for conscious agency. Significantly, it is the collocate that cues the relevant frame of reference.

The scene envisaged at Joshua 1:7–8 exemplifies Sarna's idea of *intoning*. Syntactical considerations also lend support to the reading. The phrase בו identifies the antecedent ספר as that which is to be recited, namely the contents of a book. It is a matter therefore of internalising the written law. Sarna (1993:38) aptly describes the method of study as 'reading aloud, rote learning and constant oral repetition'. On this interpretation, the interpolation reflects a subtle shift in focus from both its Deuteronomic precursor (Dt 17:19), and its principal co-text in DH (1 Ki 2:3–4), such that the act of reading Torah (קרא) is construed as a devotional practice. This innovation is consistent with a larger trend documented by Sheppard (1980:136–143): the sapientialisation of the Deuteronomic legacy through the ongoing appropriation of Wisdom traditions.

Torah piety

In the so-called didactic or Torah psalms, the Deuteronomic prescriptions regarding the study of Torah are redeployed along with its nomistic conception of the fear of God (Ps 1; 19:8–15; 119). Whatever date we attach to DH, these hymnic compositions are generally regarded as a product of the Second Temple, perhaps subsequent to the time of Alexander (Hossfeld & Zenger 2012). Critical exegetes detect a further shift in focus. If the injunctions of Deuteronomy are principally directed to the nation through the figure of the king (Weinfeld 1992:171–172),[13] the Torah Psalms address the individual religious subject. Following Mays (1987), this phenomenon may be referred to conveniently as Torah piety.

The touchstone for Mays' account is Psalms 1:1–3, the macarism standing at the head of the received Hebrew Psalter. Here, a familiar wisdom trope (the two ways) is combined with a reference to Torah piety. The individual pronounced אשרי is engaged in some manner with the Torah of YHWH. In Psalms 1:2b, ובתורתו יהגה יומם ולילה, just what is denoted by תורה is uncertain, but some instantiation of the Mosaic law is likely intended, presumably in written form. In this regard the author's use of I הגה is significant, insofar as it suggests an intertextual link with the Joshua interpolation, where the use of a book is explicitly indicated. Again the usage evokes the idea of *intoning*. A form of life is envisioned in which the meditative recitation of Torah is central.

This idea is, in Mays' (2011:381) words, 'taken to the limits of literary expression' in Psalm 119. Like Psalm 1, this composition begins with a macarism pertaining to Torah observance. Notably the author employs the verb שיח (Qal) six times in conjunction with various cognitive verbs (see Grant 2004:260–261).[14] Like I הגה it regularly evokes the idea of verbal *expression*.[15] Yet in contexts where the reference is to recollection (cued by the word זכר), שיח evokes a situation better characterised as *intoning* (with the content of the recitation again marked by ב).[16] That some form of spiritual discipline is in view is suggested by the reference to the Psalmist's practice of awaking before each watch of the night to recite God's promise (v. 148).[17] At the same time, these references are closely associated with praxis.[18] A distinct form of piety emerges, one bound up with the values and practices of scribal culture.[19]

As Davies (2011:48) has observed, the traditional goals of Wisdom were now being sought through the close study of a book (or books) identified as the law of YHWH and associated with the law-giver Moses. These writings were being used *inter alia* to inculcate a particular form of life, and with it, a new kind of ethico-religious self-understanding. Davies (2011:71) locates this piety within the social space of the Jerusalem

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12. HALOT I הגה Qal 2. (f) *to speak, proclaim* (Is 59:3; Ps 35:28; 37:30; 71:24; 115:7; Job 27:4; Pr 8:7; 15:28; Is 59:13). DCH I הגה Qal, 3. Note the following DSS attestations: 4QpPsa = Ps 37.30; 4QShirShab d 1.1 36.36.37; perhaps 4Q412 1. 6.

13. For DH, the book of the Torah represents the ideal legal constitution for a monarchic regime. See Joshua 1:7–8; 8:30–35; 22:5; 23:6; 1 Kings 2:3; yet compare Deuteronomy 31:12–13.

14. Psalms 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78, 148.

15. Compare Judges 5:10; Psalms 105:2; Job 7:11; 12:8; Proverbs 6:22 and 1 Chronicles 16:9.

16. Psalms 77:7, 13 and 143:5. See also Psalms 119:27 where the frame of references is cued by בין. Compare Si 13:2; 1 QH 9:35 and Isaiah 53:8. At Psalms 77:13 and 143:5, it parallels I הגה.

17. This discipline is reflected in the structure and rhetoric of the poem. Hossfeld and Zenger (2012:697) notes that 'In seiner Mixtur aus Wiederholung und Variation des (scheinbar) Gleichen will er sehr buchstäblich zur Meditation hinführen; seine Länge will innere Ruhe und Konzentration schaffen'.

18. See Hossfeld and Zenger (2012:695), 'Insofern ist der Psalm das Dokument einer Torafrömmigkeit bzw. sogar einter Tora-Mystik – allerdings in lebenspraktischer Absicht'.

19. Hossfeld and Zenger (2012:698) conclude 'Aufgrund seiner vielgestaltigen Intertextualität und insbesondere durch seine Verwurzelung in der Tora-Weisheit gehört der Psalm zu dan späten Psalmen des Psalters und ist ein Zeugnis der im 4. Jh. v. Chr. beginnenden jüdischen Bildungs- und Buchkultur'.

intellectual class, and dates it to somewhere in the Hellenistic period, because it presupposes both increasing literacy and individualism.[20] Such a milieu is explicitly attested in the second century BCE by Ben Sira, who was evidently directing a group of students, presumably in Jerusalem (Coggins 1998:164–167).[21] The impact of Greek models of philosophical education is patent (Davies 2011:71), a development that becomes evident in Hebrew–Greek translation.

Neo-Deuteronomistic transformations

Returning to the two key biblical texts in my narrative, Joshua 1:8 and Psalms 1:2, we find that in both instances I הגה is rendered by μελετάω in the Old Greek.[22] The match was probably first established by the translator of Joshua, on most accounts the earlier of the two.[23] In taking it up, the translator of the Psalter thereby registers an intertextual relationship between the two verses. He then employs μελετάω to render both I הגה and a number of other Hebrew forms, such that the verbal tissue of the Greek text differs significantly from its source, particularly in Psalm 118 (MT 119). Before examining that development, I shall discuss the Hebrew–Greek match. Hitherto there has been a tendency to account for it in terms of a putative overlap in semantic range. Yet this is the wrong model; for, as I shall suggest, the basis of the match is conceptual. This becomes evident when one considers the Greek verb with reference to its discursive properties.

In the literature that comes down to us, μελετάω is used in basically three ways. Firstly, in a range of contexts it evokes the frame *care*, that is, situations which feature an attitude of sustained attention or interest on the part of an agent towards some object to which he or she attaches value.[24] This usage seems to be ruled out at Joshua 1:8, where the practice of reading is thematic. Moreover, when μελετάω is used to express the idea of care or concern, it is regularly constructed with the genitive case, which picks out the object of interest. While one expects some degree of syntactical irregularity in a translation, the fact that the translator of the Psalter never constructs μελετάω with the genitive (even where an isomorphic strategy would permit it), tells against this interpretation.

Secondly, μελετάω became associated with declamation. Given that some form of literate practice is thematic at Joshua 1:7–8,

one might interpret the Greek translator's use of μελετάω thus. It is, however, difficult to justify lexicographically, for it is questionable whether the Greek verb was regularly used in this way at the time of the translation. When it is so used in the Imperial period, it represents a technical meaning. The development has its origins in the use of μελετάω to denote an exercise propaedeutic to the delivery of a speech. Eventually the cognate noun μελέτη could refer to a composition, but this usage is limited in scope (Russell 1983:10).[25] Within the context of the rhetorical schools it eventually took on a double role, referring both to a practical exercise, as before, but also to a form of imaginative literature, the speech in character, a dramatic monologue in which the author assumes the persona of an historical character or stock type (Russell 1983:12).

Thirdly, in contexts where some activity is thematic, μελετάω evokes the concept *practice*, that is, the repetition of some action by an agent in preparation for later performances of the same type. Here a frame-based analysis proves particularly illuminating. When μελετάω picks out a form of practice, it evokes a slot characteristically filled by a cultural competency.[26] Prototypical competencies include horsemanship, archery, athletic and military skills. The relevant sphere of action is expressed syntactically either by an infinitive, or by the use of a noun phrase in the accusative case.[27] Yet the latter need not specify the action directly. This would have far-reaching semantic implications, in that it allowed a Greek speaker the expressive means to conceptualise a wide range of phenomena as types of practice, a potential that was fully exploited in moral discourse, where some form of life is thematic.[28]

I would suggest that it is this use of μελετάω that underlies the translation of I הגה at Joshua 1:8. The collocation with νόμος is striking, but by no means irregular – semantically speaking it fills the relevant slot comfortably.[29] And one need not posit any sort of deliberate manipulation of the *Vorlage*. The Hebrew–Greek match may well have registered the current understanding of the Hebrew verb in this context. The idea of iteration is after all salient in both. Nevertheless the rendering involves a subtle conceptual shift. By construing the intoning of the law as a practice, the translator takes up the reference to Torah study, and assigns it a precise location within Hellenistic moral discourse, for which the conceptualisation

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20. Davies (2011:49) suggests that for Philo, Torah does not represent a communal ethic, so much as a guide to the perfection of the individual soul.

21. Although based on long-standing Ancient Near Eastern scribal values, his instruction marks a departure from traditional emphases, insofar as it is focussed on the study of the Mosaic law.

22. Joshua 1:8, καὶ μελετήσεις ἐν αὐτῷ ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός. Psalms 1:2, καὶ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ αὐτοῦ μελετήσει ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτός. Compare Aquila and Symmachus who at Psalms 1:2 match הגה (Qal) by φθέγγομαι, and hence with reference to *vocalisation*. Aquila also uses φθέγγομαι as a match at Psalms 62:7 (MT 63:7).

23. Van der Meer (2006:59–61) suggests a 3rd c. BCE date for Greek Joshua. Williams (2001:27) dates the Greek Psalter to the 2nd c. BCE 'with a high degree of confidence'.

24. The phrase μελέτω σοι occurs frequently in Hellenistic and Greco-Roman epistolary discourse to signal a matter warranting attention. See for instance, the memorandum of Zenodorus (210 BCE) *P.Tebt.* 3.1 703. μελέτω δέ σοι καὶ [ἵ]να τὰ [ὤ]νια μὴ πλείονος πωλῆται τῶν διαγεγραμ[μ]ένων τιμῶν.

25. Not every declamatory exercise is a μελέτη. It denotes either a forensic or a deliberative speech.

26. One admitting improvement by degree. Thus, Aristotle (385–323 BCE), *Rhetoric*, (3) 1411b, τὸ γὰρ μελετᾶν αὔξειν τι ἐστίν (LCL 193: 402).

27. Compare Isocrates (436–338 BCE), *Antidosis*, 298, ἢ Θετταλοὶ παρὰ τῶν ἱππεύειν μελετώντων δίκην λαμβάνειν ἀξιοῖεν (LCL 229:350), with Isocrates, *Busiris*, 15, τοὺς δὲ τὰ περὶ τὸν πόλεμον μελετᾶν ἠνάγκασεν (LCL 373:110).

28. An exemplary instance is Plato, *Laws*, 1.643b, λέγω δή, καί φημι τὸν ὁτιοῦν ἀγαθὸν ἄνδρα μέλλοντα ἔσεσθαι τοῦτο αὐτὸ ἐκ παίδων εὐθὺς μελετᾶν δεῖν, παίζοντά τε καὶ σπουδάζοντα ἐν τοῖς τοῦ πράγματος ἑκάστοις προσήκουσιν (LCL 187:62).

29. See, for example, Hyperides (390–322 BCE), *Against Athenogenes*, 3.13, with reference to the study of civic statutes for use in court, ὥστε τούς τε νόμους ἐξετάζειν καὶ μελετᾶν νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν (LCL 395:440). Compare Pausanius (c. 110–180), *Description of Greece*, 8.51, regarding the training of youths in accordance with a specific legal code, τείχη δὲ περιεῖλε τῆς Σπάρτης καὶ τοῖς ἐφήβοις προεῖτε μὴ τὰ ἐκ τῶν νόμων τῶν Λυκούργου μελετᾶν, ἐφήβοις δὲ τοῖς Ἀχαιῶν κατὰ ταῦτα ἀσκεῖσθαι (LCL 297:152).

of moral agency in terms of training and exercise – in a word, habituation – was fundamental.[30] A popular trope in this respect is the pedagogical role of civic νόμος, such that the νόμος of a city-state or people provides a template for the formation of character.[31]

Given that the exercise referred to at Joshua 1:8 involves a written copy of the law, it is aptly glossed 'meditative' (compare μελετή). It is the syntax that remains puzzling. Rather than take the accusative case, νόμος is the head of a prepositional phrase with ἐν. Analogy with other texts suggests that the phrase functions in place of the construction τὰ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ.[32] Yet the question of motivation arises. That it represents an artefact of translation (matching ב) is only part of the picture, as the preference for isomorphism in Hebrew–Greek translation competes with other values.[33] In Greek Joshua, for instance, negative transfer tends to be avoided.[34] One thus infers that the morphosyntactic shape of Joshua 1:8 is not merely reflex of its source. A cognitive approach may shed some light on its linguistic acceptability (see Bartone 2010:1–104; see also Langacker 1987). On this view, ἐν prototypically cues a situation of *containment* involving a trajector (something undergoing change) and a landmark (a salient point of reference) (see Luraghi 2003:82–93). Understood thus it serves nicely as a linguistic expression of the relationship between a practice and its sphere of action. If the construction is irregular, there is little doubt that a Greek reader would have made the connection.[35] Moreover, it is serendipitous. One cultivates a life congruent to God's will through spiritual exercise within the sphere of his law.

According to the story I want to tell, this idea, having found expression in the translation of I הגה at Joshua 1:8, was deliberately echoed at Psalms 1:2. It then became a motif within the Greek Psalter, partly by serendipity and partly by design. On the one hand, μελετάω served as a match for I הגה, and was used by the translator as a sort of default. On the other, the intertextual link forged at Psalms 1:2 provided a thematic impetus. So much is evident in the translator's handling of Psalms 118 (MT 119), where μελετάω occurs five

times and renders no less than three Hebrew verbs.[36] It is illuminating to consider each in turn.

Firstly, there is the match with שׁיח at Psalms 118:148, where the translator follows the lead of the source text.[37] As I have indicated, this verb typically evokes some form of verbal *expression* and is rendered one of two ways elsewhere in the Greek Psalter: either by ἀδολεσχέω[38] or by διηγέομαι.[39] Here, where it evokes the idea of *intoning* God's word (אמרתך), the translator suspends his default renderings and introduces μελετάω. The reference to an early hour (πρὸς ὄρθρον), a time conventionally associated with spiritual exercises, may have primed the rendering.[40]

In the case of the other two matches one must speak of innovation. Given the rarity of II שׁעע, it is possible that there was no conventional Greek equivalent and that the translator had to rely on contextual prompts. At Psalms 93:19 (Pilpel), where the subject of the Hebrew text is YHWH, he renders it by ἀγαπάω. Yet in Ps 118 at vv. 16, 47 (Htpalp) and v. 70 (Pilpel), where a form of Torah study is thematic, he takes his cue from Joshua 1:8 (and the intertextual reference at Psalms 1:2) and introduces μελετάω.[41] The match fits contextually, especially given the proximity of cognitive verbs.[42] The third form rendered by μελετάω, שׁעה (Qal), generally evokes some form of sustained attention (prototypically visual). This understanding of the Hebrew verb is consistently reflected in the Greek Pentateuch and was likely known to the translator of the Psalter.[43] At Psalms 118:117, however, where it is construed with בחקיך (ἐν τοῖς δικαιώμασιν σου), he assimilates it to the idea of *practice*, in accordance with his handling of II שׁעע.

A discussion of μελετάω in the Greek Psalter would not be complete without a few words on the noun μελέτη. Like μελετάω, it regularly evoke the category of *practice*. Competencies such as javelin-throwing, archery and catapult-shooting are typical.[44] Yet, as observed here, it is used in philosophical discourse with reference to spiritual exercises.[45] The word occurs seven times in Psalm 118,

30. Foucault (2005:356–359) suggests that whereas in moral discourse the γυμνάζω word group generally designates a sort of practical test in life, the μελεταω word group, by contrast, evokes an exercise of thought (often accompanied by the use of a text). See for instance Epictetus, *Discourses*, 1.1.25, with reference to certain Stoic maxims, ταῦτα ἔδει μελετᾶν τοὺς φιλοσοφοῦντας, ταῦτα καθ᾽ ἡμέραν γράφειν, ἐν τούτοις γυμνάζεσθαι; (LCL 131: 12-13).

31. The *locus classicus* is Plato, *Crito*, 50a–54d, where the laws of Athens are personified and given a direct form of address by Socrates. For the mutual dependence of law and character formation in Plato and later Greco-Roman sources, including notably Philo (see Annas 2017).

32. Symmachus retains the verb at Psalms 62:7 (MT 63:7), and Aquila at Psalms 142:5 (MT 143:5), but in both instances the prepositional phrase with ἐν is replaced by an accusative form. At Psalms 76:13 (MT 77:13) Symmachus renders the verb by διαμελετάω with regular syntax.

33. Van der Meer (2015:96) detects a 'concern for style, variation and contextual harmonisation'.

34. Whereas ב is regularly matched by ἐν, this default may be suspended depending upon syntactical constraints. See Joshua 2:22, where ἐκζητέω matches בקשׁ (Piel), the prepositional phrase בכל הדרך is rendered by the accusative πάσας τὰς ὁδούς. At Joshua 6:5 where the verb σαλπίζω matches משׁך (Qal), the phrase בקרן is rendered by the dative τῇ σάλπιγγι (see also Jos 6:13). See also Joshua 9:19 where the middle passive of ἅπτω matches the verb נגע (Qal) and the phrase בהם is rendered by αὐτῶν.

35. Compare *P. Lond.* 7.2017 (242 BCE) in which the musician Heracleotes requests material assistance from Zenon to support his preparation for upcoming competitions. δοῦναι μοι ἐν ᾧ μελετῶν ἀγωνιοῦμ[αι. Here the requisites of the practice are salient.

36. Austermann (2003:132) discusses the translator's recourse to parallel passages for interpretative orientation.

37. The translator adhered to the same match in Psalms 142:5 where μελετάω renders שׁיח twice. In both cases the reference is to the recollection of God's works.

38. Psalms 54:18 (MT 55:18); 104:2 (MT 105:2); 68:13 (MT 69:13); 144:5 (MT 145:5).

39. Psalms 76:4, 7, 13 (MT 77:4, 7, 13); 118:15, 23, 27, 48, 78 (MT 119:15, 23, 27, 48, 78).

40. The translator's use of ἀδολεσχέω where μελετάω might seem a better fit underscores the interaction of convention and innovation which characterises this translation.

41. Austermann (2003:132) remarks apropos the match, 'Ausgangs- und Zielword entsprechen sich semantisch nur, insofern beide Wörter intensive Beschäftigungen mit dem jeweiligen Objekt bezeichnen'.

42. At v. 16 the act of *remembering* is indicated (לא אשׁכח דברך); in v. 48 there is a reference to *musing* or *pondering* (ואשׂיחה בחקיך) and in v. 71 *learning* (למען אלמד חקיך).

43. The verb is rendered by ἐφοράω at Genesis 4:4; προσέχω at Genesis 4:5 and μεριμνάω at Exodus 5:9. The translator of the Psalter evidently had recourse to Hebrew-Greek matches established in the Greek Pentateuch (see Tov 1981).

44. See *IG* XII,5 647 (3rd c. bce), a law concerning a festival at Koresia on Keos, which stipulates regular practice for the youth. καὶ ἐξάγειν εἰς μελέτην ἀκοντισμοῦ καὶ τοξικῆς καὶ καταπαλταφεσίας τρὶς τοῦ μηνός.

45. The prototypical spiritual exercise was the μελέτη τοῦ θανάτου, for which the *locus classicus* is Plato, *Phaedo*, 81a (see Foucault 2005:477–480).

matching שעשעים (vv. 24, 77, 92, 143, 174) and שיחה (vv. 97 and 99). Both are rare words, yet, tellingly, each is a cognate of one of the verbs the translator renders by μελετάω (שיח and עשע respectively).[46] In every instance the Hebrew noun collocates with a reference either to the Mosaic law or its statutes. The collocation likely prompted the translator's use of μελέτη, which in turn coheres thematically with his use of μελετάω.[47]

What emerges from the interplay of these two Greek words and their collocates in Psalm 118 is a vivid depiction of Torah study reframed as a spiritual discipline. One is of course mindful of the caveat sounded by Frank Austermann, 'dass es sich beim Septuaginta-Psalter um eine Übersetzung handelt, nicht aber um ein eigenstandiges theologisches Dokument' (Austermann 2001:333). It does seem likely, however, that the motivation for this construal of the Hebrew psalm was Greco-Jewish practice. As it happens, there is corroborating evidence external to the translation corpus. In Ps. Aristeas, a near-contemporary Greco-Jewish document, reference is made to the very sort of discipline envisioned by the Greek Psalmist.[48] In §160 Eleazar takes up his interpretation of Deuteronomy 6.[49] The obligation to speak of the law, however, is expressed by μελετάω.[50] Benjamin Wright notes that the other practices identified in this context, such as observing one's own movements and impression in states of waking and sleeping, are typical of Hellenistic moral discourse.

In conclusion, there is reason to believe that Philo's list of spiritual exercises alludes to a Greco-Jewish tradition with deep roots, the *meditatio scriptura*. It was already undergoing further transformation at this time. In 4 Maccabees, for instance, which probably dates to late first or early second century ce (see Collins 1983:204), the study of Torah is fully conceptualised on the analogy of athletic training.[51] This idea was in turn redeployed in Early Christianity. In 1 Timothy reference is made to the reading of scripture in relation to instruction and moral exhortation.[52] Timothy is not to neglect these matters, μὴ ἀμέλει τοῦ ἐν σοὶ χαρίσματος (4:14), but to practice them, ταῦτα μελέτα, ἐν τούτοις ἴσθι, ἵνα σου ἡ προκοπὴ φανερὰ ἦ πᾶσιν (4:15). The contrast between neglect and care is a familiar rhetorical topos (Johnson 2001:253). Insofar as the object of training is now focussed squarely on the life-to-come, there is a significant conceptual shift. Yet both the

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46. For the form שיחה see Job 15:4. It was evidently associated with some form of vocal *expression*. For שעשעים see Isaiah 5:7 and Proverbs 8:31. It denotes the expression of an emotional state.

47. Note that he first uses μελέτη at Psalms 18:15 to render the Hebrew noun הגיון, which is cognate to הגה. So again he is clearly taking his cue from the rendering of the verbal form at Joshua 1:8.

48. According to Wright (2015:299), there is no clear evidence that the author knows the Greek Psalter.

49. The grammar of the text is admittedly problematic (see Wright 2015:299–300).

50. Wright (2015:300) suggested that rather than studying the law, Jews are here enjoined to meditate on God's creation. Yet given the collocation of μελετάω and νόμος, scriptural study is likely in view.

51. See 4 Maccabees 13:22, καὶ αὔξονται σφοδρότερον διὰ συντροφίας καὶ τῆς καθ᾽ ἡμέραν συνηθείας καὶ τῆς ἄλλης παιδείας καὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας ἐν νόμῳ θεοῦ ἀσκήσεως.

52. 1 Timothy 4:13, ἕως ἔρχομαι πρόσεχε τῇ ἀναγνώσει, τῇ παρακλήσει, τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ.

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discipline to which the author refers, and its conceptualisation as a *practice*, would have been familiar not only to Philo, but to the Hellenistic translators of Joshua and the Psalms.

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