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The translation of πνευμα in John 3:8

ABSTRACT

All Afrikaans translations of John 3:8 translates πνευμα as “wind”. A progression of the meaning of the word πνευμα is evident considering the background of πνευμα in Greek and Jewish thought. This progression is helpful in discerning viable translations of John 3:8, especially in Afrikaans translations. A variation of the Afrikaans translation of “wind” to “spirit” in John 3:8 can be helpful to broaden our understanding.

1. INTRODUCTION

The word πνευμα is difficult to translate as it has various translation possibilities including “wind”, “spirit” and “breath” and it is not always easy to clearly distinguish between these meanings (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:374). It occurs 24 times in the Gospel of John and is thus heralded as one of the gospel’s main characteristic features (Burge 1987:42).² Burge (1987:xvi) argues that the Johannine community was a pneumatic community as each member formed part of this distinctive community life. One of the foremost features of Johannine pneumatology was its Christ centric³ basis (Burge 1987:xvi). Keener (2003:115) mentions that “inspiration is a category with which modern readers are far less equipped to deal with than ancient readers were as the concept of inspiration was widely understood and articulated in antiquity”. The manner in which modern readers interpret the translations of πνευμα in John 3:8, especially the Afrikaans translation seems to be problematic.

It is important to clarify how we as modern readers understand the (Holy)⁴ Spirit, as it is evident from popular books and information on the Holy Spirit that people tend to misunderstand the Holy Spirit as a magical force. Studies regarding pneumatology have been focussed on intratestamental literature, rather than looking at it from an intercanonical perspective of how the Israelite view of the spirit, obtained from birth to death, was rearranged in early Christian literature (Levison 2011:82). The question is however what is meant by “spirit” and should the

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2 In contrast, Brodie mentions that the concept of Spirit is not fully developed in John (Brodie 1993:196).

He argues that the comparison of Spirit and wind is brief and seems to open up some idea of the possibilities offered by the spirit world (Brodie 1993:197). However, John 3 has been regarded as one of the texts that indicate John’s understanding of πνευμα in a salvific manner (Bennema 2002:195), and accordingly πνευμα is not underdeveloped in John in the opinion of this study.

3 Tibbs mentions that there are ample reasons to argue that the earliest New Testament pneumatology reflected a spirit world populated with many holy and evil spirits, not just one Holy Spirit as is commonly assumed today (Tibbs 2008:314). There are multiple christologies in John. The link between the Cross and πνευμα is intertwined in the Gospel of John. It does however seem possible to speak of multiple pneumatologies (Tibbs 2008:320). Everts even implies that the spirit in Ezekiel’s vision is not the spirit that raised Jesus from the dead (Levison 2011:81). In early Judaism the spirit creation was populated with “holy spirits”, “spirits of truth” and “spirits of God” that reflect the Jewish world of the New Testament (Tibbs 2008:320).

4 The general tendency in biblical scholarship is that later Trinitarian theology shaped the way that New Testament texts about the Spirit are read (Tibbs 2008:313).

term be associated with God and consequently with the Holy Spirit especially regarding John 3:8?

Levison (2011:84) posits that early Christian notions and experiences of the Holy Spirit were rooted in their first century framework and this includes both early Judaism as well as the larger Greco Roman world. Horsley (2005:23) mentions that in the ancient world of the texts, religion was not separated from political-economical life and that in the time of Jesus there was no such thing yet as a religion called Judaism, judging from sources such as the Gospels, the Dead Sea Scrolls or historians such as Josephus.⁵ Various movements occurred during the first century C.E. as a result of the tumultuous rule of Roman oppressors (see Callahan 2005:162-164). This has implications for the way in which the (Holy) Spirit is understood and makes it necessary to investigate what was meant by πνευμα and how it was perceived in the ancient world. Subsequently, it is the aim of this study to investigate the functioning of πνευμα in Jewish thought, Greek thought and briefly investigate the Septuagint and the New Testament as a means to better understand the word. This study will then examine translations of John 3:8 and interpret these translations with reference to the historical background of πνευμα.

1.1 Translations

This study will work with Ziegler's LXX Greek text as the baseline Greek text. Various translations will also be used to ascertain how modern translators have translated πνευμα. This study will continually weigh these translations against the historical background of πνευμα to illuminate our modern understanding. Subsequently, various languages will be used to broaden the spectrum of interpretation i.e. English, Afrikaans, Dutch and French.

2. INTERPRETATION OF חוּר IN JEWISH THOUGHT

The ancient experience of spirits and their understanding differs intrinsically from the modern understanding thereof. It is important to mention that English translations of חוּר manage to separate what would have been understood by an ancient Hebrew person as a single, complex meaning in which natural, psychic and supernatural aspects were grasped (Myers 1987:496). The ancient Hebrew would not have distinguished between what is in the mind and what comes from outside (Heron 1983:5). The human self was visualised as more permeable than we as modern people normally assume, more open to external influences which could have been spoken of in more or less personal terms (Heron 1983:5). It was believed that a spirit could be passing from one person to another, for example, Elisha asked for a double share of חוּר from Elijah in 2 Kings 2:9 (Heron 1983:5).

The phrase "Holy Spirit" was first used in the post-exilic period (Balz & Schneider 1993:118). According to Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry (2004:372) a theological meaning was first attached to חוּר during the post-exilic period as well as through the prophets. The phrase "Holy spirit", only appears three times in the Old Testament i.e. Psalm 51:13 (חוּרוֹ דְשֶׁדֶק) and Isaiah 63:10 (חוּרֵי וְשֶׁדֶק), 11 (חוּרֵי וְשֶׁדֶק) (Block 1989:27; cf. Heron 1983:3; Wood 1978:20).

There are three different expressions employed in the Old Testament for spirit i.e. הַמְשֵׁנ, בּוֹא and חוּר. The use of בּוֹא is exceptional and is used to refer to spirits of the dead or even ghosts themselves, as is the case in Isaiah 29:4. The word is also used in the summoning of spirits with reference to the necromancer who makes contact with departed spirits (1 Sam 28:7-8) (Block 1989:28).

⁵ Horsley suggests that the modern view of Christianity did not develop until late antiquity and it is best to rather refer to the "Jesus movement" as opposed to Christianity (Horsley 2005:24).

2.1 The use of המשנ

The noun המשנ occurs 24 times and means “breathe”. It is used in reference to the breath of humans or God and particularly in referring to that which gives life to a body (Block 1989:28). The term is in the Rabbinic literature, together with שפנ and חור, usual terms for the human soul and coinciding – there exists no distinction between spirit and soul (Friedrich 1968:377). שפנ and חור both mean “life” and “breath”, although חור is mostly connected with Yahweh – in contrast to שפנ that in comparison to חור, a connection with Yahweh would be deemed rare (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:375). שפנ and חור are especially applied to the animal and physical functions of the soul whilst המשנ is more commonly used for the soul as coming from heaven and as a vital force (Friedrich 1968:377). Breath is usually connected to the mouth or nostrils, but sometimes it signifies “spirited” behaviour as seen in Job 4:9; 9:18; 15:30; cf. 2 Samuel 22:16 (Myers 1987:496).

This expression was well known in the Ancient Near East. In an Ugaritic text the death of Aqhat is described as “his life shall depart like a breath” (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:368). Accordingly this term describes the power of life and has to do with breathing, but is particularly associated with blood⁶ in the older Old Testament writings (Heron 1983:6). Like in the Old Testament, life is associated with blood in the Ancient Near East and the idea existed that when blood is poured out, life departs through the nostrils like a breath or smoke (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:369).

2.2 The use of חור

The noun חור and its West Semitic synonym “qtr” evokes images that represent the transitoriness of life (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:369). Every living creature, human or animal, has a המשנ (Heron 1983:6). חור is the “breath of life” in Genesis 6:17; 7:15, 22; Ezekiel 37:5-6, 8-10; cf. v. 14 and in the RSV translated as “spirit” (also Ps. 146:4 and Jer. 10:14), which is emanating from God alone and is the equivalent of the animating spirit (Myers 1987:496). שפנ can indicate a whole person, but חור is always understood as “within” someone and represents a person’s “interior”, the spiritual centre from which the entire person is engaged (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:375). In contrast, Hamilton (2003:114) mentions that God does not indwell the individual in the Old Testament, but is in the midst of them via the tabernacle or the temple.

The most used designation for “spirit” in the Old Testament is חור which occurs 378 times in the Hebrew text and an additional 11 times in the Aramaic⁷ parts of Daniel (Block 1989:28, cf. Wood 1978:16; Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:372). The root meaning has to do with the movement of air, but it acquired a myriad of other meanings, i.e. wind, breath, and life and then came to be applied to the human “spirit” or “self” as well as that what we would describe as “mood” or “temper” (Heron 1983:4). This term is used to describe the human spirit, God’s Holy Spirit and several other entities such as wind, breath, odour⁸ and space (Wood 1978:16). Block (1989:28) adds that חור semantic range includes breath, wind, direction, spirit and mind. Heron mentions that these examples can lead us into its meaning in connection with God (1983:4).

2.3 The use of חור as wind

The most basic meaning is “wind” and it is used approximately 101 times (Wood 1978:17). חור

6 The drinking of the blood-soul was prohibited, thus the blood of slaughtered animals was not drunk, but offered to God as for example in Leviticus 17:10-14 (Heron 1983:6).

7 In Old Aramaic, stela III from Sefire speaks of “breath of life” that concerns a fugitive pleading for his life i.e. seeking asylum (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:369).

8 The contexts in the Ugaritic text (KTU, 1.3, II, 2) concerns coriander and thus חור should be translated as “aroma” (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:368).

as wind commonly refers to the strong wind of the storm, the raging blast from the desert, like the one that divided the Red Sea at the exodus (Exod. 14:21), but this wind is not identical to the חור of God as it is an elemental power and has accordingly an image of divine strength (Heron 1983:4). The concept of חור is thus largely an impersonal concept and has to do with natural or supernatural strength, power, force and energy (Heron 1983:4). The Old Testament often regards it as a divine phenomenon⁹ sent from God or heaven as seen in Genesis 8:1; Exodus 14:21; Numbers 11:31; Job 26:13; Hosea 13:15, but it also represent elemental chaos (Prov. 25:14) or emptiness (Job 6:26; 7:7; Ps. 78:39; Eccl. 1:14; Isa. 41:29) (Myers 1987:496). Wind can also be utilized as an image of divine judgement drawing from the image of winnowing grain and scattering chaff to the winds (Myers 1987:496).

2.4 חור in personal categories

In Judaism the Spirit is autonomous and is often spoken of in personal categories in Rabbinic writings with references to the Spirit speaking, crying, admonishing, sorrowing, weeping, rejoicing and comforting (Friedrich 1968:387). The result of this notion is the view that the Spirit is a personal angelic being, but the Spirit is never present in heavenly assemblies and the notion should rather be that the Spirit is an objective reality that encounters and claims man (Friedrich 1968:387). חור functions at the level of persons to mould their attitudes and behaviour (Heron 1983:6) and is not understood as a person per se. חור can also have another meaning due to its application to influences and moods of a personal kind or spirits conceived as quasi-personal identities (Heron 1983:4). This type of application is rare and does not have the same interest in good and evil 'spirits' as some strands in later Jewish thought and the New Testament display (Heron 1983:4). It is difficult to make a distinction between 'spirit' as a mood or attitude and a 'spirit' as a more independent agent (Heron 1983:4).

2.5 Good and evil

In Judaism, as a result of the environment, אטטטט / חור is often used to apply to otherworldly good or evil beings¹⁰ (Balz & Schneider 1993:118). In the older strata of the Old Testament the use of חור in connection with evil or demonic beings features more prominently, for example Judges 9:23 – God sent an evil חור between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; 1 Samuel 16:14 – an evil חור from the Lord tormented Saul and 1 Kings 22:22=2 Chronicles 18:21 – God allowed a “חור ילין” to deceive the prophets advising Ahab (Heron 1983:5; cf. Myers 1987:49). In addition, חור can also refer to angels¹¹ (Myers 1987:496). Heron (1983:5) mentions that חור is utilised in describing the good or evil influence coming from God.¹² In fact, the Old Testament discloses little about the actual nature of God (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:372). Israel thinks of God as a subject that lives outside the world, but in relation to the world and humanity

9 In an Ugaritic text (KTU 1.5,V,7) חור is used to describe Baäl's descent into the netherworld “And you – take your clouds, your wind, your lightning, your rain” that shows that חור is one of the meteorological phenomena associated with Baäl-Hadad, the god of storms and tempests (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:368). Baäl-Hadad is a lot like to Marduk in the Akkadian and Sumerian mythology, but unlike Marduk, he does not appear as the creator of the world (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:370).

10 In Mesopotamia there is an antithesis between the good and the evil wind and reflects gods who may either bless or afflict (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:370).

11 The Babylonians thought of the winds as messengers of the gods (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:370).

12 It is remarkable that the Sumerians, although the word used for חור in the East Semitic languages is saru, Enlil, is “the lord of the air” implying that he was the lord of the atmosphere and wind who had a good wind that brought vegetation and life as well as a evil wind that functioned as a destructive force (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:369).

and who reveres them with favour (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:372). There is a direct link in the Old Testament between the favourable presence of God and the well-being of his people, physical as well as spiritual (Hamilton 2003:114).

2.6 חַיִּים and creation

חַיִּים has an implicit reference to God as man's Creator and Sustainer even as applied to man; and thus it becomes a linking term between God and to human life in its dependence upon God (Heron 1983:7).¹³ Israel's understanding of God and the world is anthropomorphic¹⁴ as well as ethnocentric (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:372). In the creation epic of the Akkadian and Sumerian mythology, Marduk uses winds as weapons in his battle against Tiamat, keeping the power over winds and meteorological phenomena for himself after assigning the gods their places and roles (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:369). Marduk divides Tiamat's body into the sky and earth after killing her (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:370). The distinction between Israel's use of חַיִּים and that of its neighbours exist in the fact that Israel used חַיִּים as an extension of personality which means that they understood God to be active in their world in contrast to the Egyptian religion and Mesopotamian mythology where the gods were confined to their own world and humans only functioned to serve them. In early Judaism, the Spirit as inspiring force was in general associated with prophecy, although other associations were also connected to the Spirit in many circles, particularly the Qumran community¹⁵ (Keener 2003:117).

2.7 Summa

In Jewish thought חַיִּים is understood as a life giving force. It is closely associated with breathing and blood. This life force is permeable and subjected to influences of the external world, contrary to modern perceptions.

3. THE INTERPRETATION OF πνεῦμα IN GREEK THOUGHT

πνεῦμα is at all times viewed in the Greek world, in contrast to Jewish thought, as a thing and never as a person (Friedrich 1968:359). Paige (2002:426) mentions that πνεῦμα was recognized as something perishable and not as a conscious being¹⁶. In the early Greek tragedies, πνεῦμα means "breath, "soul" and "wind", but does not contain the meaning of spirit in the sense of a personal or supernatural meaning (Paige 2002:420). In Greek literature πνεῦμα as "wind" or "breath" would have been recognized, but not in the application of "spirit" that permeates the LXX as well as Philo's work (Best 1959:225). It would be anachronistic to assume that Greek religion was acquainted with a developed idea or doctrine of "Spirit" or that their concept of inspiration was connected to a theological meaning, as in the Jewish or Christian literature (Paige 2002:419).

13 The idea that God is the creator of all things is central in the doctrine of the Treatise on the two spirits in Qumran (Tukasi 2008:39).

14 Israel's understanding of God and the world is anthropomorphic i.e. Gen. 2 does not even mention the creation of world, but only the origin of humans (Botterweck, Ringgren & Fabry 2004:372).

15 In the Treatise on two Spirits in Qumran, all people are created by the God of Knowledge, but people do not belong to the same category and they are not all regarded as children of God (Tukasi 2008:47). No human can escape the activities of the spirits once he or she has partaken in them and consequently the two spirits determine the character of human beings. The Rule however does not resolve how people acquire these spirits (Tukasi 2008:48).

16 It is remarkable that πνεῦμα is used in connection with Greek deities. It seems that the Greeks viewed their deities not as everlasting beings and as unpredictable as the wind. There is an overwhelming uncertainty that is not seen in the Christian or Jewish usage of the word.

3.1 πνεύμα as natural force

In the Greek world πνεύμα means the rudimentary natural and crucial force that acts as a stream of air blowing; as the wind and as the inhaling of breath (Friedrich 1968:335; cf. Makambu 2007:34). Greeks also used the wind as an example of unpredictability as to “write in the wind or water” is to make a promise that one can not keep (Catullus 70.4 in Keener 2003:555). πνεύμα may be the “storm” that blows powerfully, the “fair wind” which rises quickly and unexpectedly and which may be favourable or unfavourable, the light “breath of wind” (from heaven) which is divinely soft and pure or the “exhalation”, “the “vapour” that rises from the interior of the earth, containing mantic powers that can be fatal (Friedrich 1968:335). πνεύμα can be the breath that enthuses, stirs, whips up support and fills select psyches of poets, priests and prophets, especially the Pythia at Delphi,¹⁷ in certain corporeal and spiritual operations (Friedrich 1968:338).

3.2 πνεύμα as life giving force

Friedrich (1968:335) perpetuates that the breath of the spirit may in a way be detected both outwardly and inwardly as something that fills with inspiration and grips with enthusiasm (contra Paige 2002:421). There is a myth from the earliest Greek witness to the Egyptian *theologoumenon*, Aeschylus that offers the only Greek story of a god, Zeus, who produces a divine son in a mortal woman solely through his breath (Friedrich 1968:341). In contrast, Paige argues that this interpretation of πνεύμα is incorrect, as the text does not include πνεύμα according to him (Paige 2002:421). The understanding of πνεύμα as life giving breath, is however not far fetched. Makambu (2007:34) mentions that the root of πνεύμα – πνε derives from breathing as well as the inspiration of a divinity, a vapour and sweating. In primitive mythology the generative and life-creating cosmogonic power of wind is widespread (Friedrich 1968:340). It also delineates breathing as a cause to life and was also used to denote the smell from a fire (Makambu 2007:34). Zeus is associated with cosmic πνεύμα that consists of air and fire (Friedrich 1968:356). Cleanthus appears to have been the first to define a deity as πνεύμα, applying this term to Poseidon (Friedrich 1968:356). Wind is offered by nature as a category of being and a form for that which is without beginning before all beginning (Friedrich 1968:340).

3.3 πνεύμα as substance

In Hellenistic spheres πνεύμα is sometimes thought of as substance and often mixed with ideas from Greek philosophy and speculation “wisdom” (Balz & Schneider 1993:118). In secular Greek it was used in the sense of mantic-enthusiastic inspiration and later in Stoicism of a cosmic-universal divine energy or substance that still exists in the world (Balz & Schneider 1993:118; cf. Paige 2002:424). Plato used πνεύμα with reference to the cosmos and in his myth about the creation¹⁸ of earth; he compares the wind to an aspect of breathing (Makambu 2007:35). The Stoics used πνεύμα as a technical term in psychics (Paige 2002:424). In Stoic cosmology the universal πνεύμα is a rational and intentional being that embodies the λόγος of the Whole (Buch-Hansen 2010:1). In Stoic thought however, God is associated with πνεύμα as he is in everything, giving it form and character according to reason (Paige 2002:425).

3.4 Being possessed

17 It is known that the Pythia used hallucinogens to obtain a state of ecstasy in which prophecy was given to others who was not aware of this method (Littleton 1986:87; see Paige 2002:429). This practice seems to have even been hidden from Strabo, Pliny and perhaps even Plutarch (Littleton 1986:87). In contrast to Littleton, Paige argues that Strabo was aware of this tradition and that πνεύμα was merely understood as “holy gas” (Paige 2002:428).

18 Phédon 112 b6-cl. C.J. Rowe, Plato, 97.283.

The idea of being possessed by πνεύμα was widespread in the ancient world as the poet Hesiod, for example, maintained that he has been inspired by the πνεύμα that was breathed into him by the Muses while he was on Mount Halcyon (Littleton 1986:83). This is challenged by Paige as the word that Hesiod uses is ἐμπνεῶ that only suggests blowing and not πνεύμα (Paige 2002:421). Liddell & Scott also mentions the use of πνεύμα by poets, although πνοή is more common (Liddell & Scott 1968:1424).

3.5 πνεύμα in ancient rhetoric and literary aesthetics

In ancient rhetoric and literary aesthetics πνεύμα also bears the meaning of elevated speech and θεῖον πνεύμα (divine breath) sometimes denoted a constituent of music (Friedrich 1968:338). Homer uses πνεύμα as the energetic movement of air as well as in a sense of blowing, for example it could also be applied to an instrument (Makambu 2007:34). In Plutarch 2.129c πνεύμα is meant as “of spirit” or “spiritual” (Liddell & Scott 1968:1424). The Greeks did, however, use the winds as an analogy for the gods – they are invisible yet we see their effects (Keener 2003:555). The Muses breathed a divine breath into poets (Friedrich 1968:344). Paige (2002:421) suggests that this should be understood as a metaphor in which the deity is blowing or breathing, but not to see it as an infilling or inspiring of the poet. Language does not function in isolation. In contrast to Paige, it is possible in view of this study that this expression could have gained added meaning as the infilling of spirit, of which there is enough evidence to substantiate this type of metaphor. Subsequently, πνεύμα is associated with a deity. πνεύμα is both material and spiritual, both divine and natural in Greek thought and power flows from it, is mediated by it and disappears with it (Friedrich 1968:335).

Coincidentally, Friedrich (1968:340) mentions that the concept of πνεύμα in the Hellenic world developed on the notion of specific modalities postulated through popular religious belief concerning the direct and comprehensive connection of being and operation between wind, breath, soul and the power of generation, life and spirit. Makambu also states: “d’exprimer de la colère, du courage, mais aussi le sens de la bienveillance (tout ce qui est porté par l’élément de l’air)” (Makambu 2007:34). Thus πνεύμα is associated with specific modalities.

3.6 πνεύμα functioning as mediator

In medicine, philosophy and religion, πνεύμα fulfils a mediatory role as it is understood as the macrocosm that mediates between the inner and outer, warmth and cold, matter and spirit and in magic it functions as the impersonal medium that attains contact between the divine and human, the upper world and the nether world (Friedrich 1968:359). It is, however, interesting that Paige (2002:429) mentions that it was not strange for a mantic to ingest or apply a natural element from the sacred area or shrine, for example, at the Deiradiotes temple of Apollo, near Argos, a woman savours blood from a sacrificial lamb and is inspired, where as the priestess of Earth¹⁹ at Aegira prefers bull’s blood before she descends the oracle. This however links to the connection חור has with blood.

3.7 The progression of πνεύμα

It is interesting that πνεύμα’s meaning from secular Greek is changed by the Jewish and Christian influence in two instances i.e. 1) πνεύμα is isolated from its relation to nature and spiritualised, hypostatised and personified as an independent, personally living and active cosmological and soteriological Spirit of God *sui generis* whether of supreme or lower rank; 2) another non-

19 There can be a connection drawn between the concept of πνεύμα and its association with the earth, as in this example, and the vapours from the earth as seen in the oracle of Delphi. This connection is an indication that πνεύμα has an earthly aspect or more specifically it is within human grasp.

Greek application is that of magic where πνευμα is used to indicate supernatural spirits and intermediaries, whether good or evil that inhabit the air and can cause good or bad as a result of the magical power emanating from them (Friedrich 1968:339). Paige (2002:427) argues that there existed in Greek thought a word for “spirit” that specifically refers to the Christian understanding of it i.e. ὁ δαίμων. In Greek literature πνευμα in terms of ὁ δαίμων impinged in pagan writings in the second century due to Christian influence (Paige 2002:427). The variety of meanings applied to πνευμα doesn’t originate from the Hellenistic world, but was enriched with Jewish influence (Best 1959:218).

3.8 Summa

πνευμα is interpreted as a external force like the wind that induces inspiration. This inspiration can be viewed similarly to the idea of being possessed. πνευμα is never interpreted in Greek thought as a person.

4. πνευμα IN THE LXX

The LXX translates three-fourths of חור as πνευμα (Block 1989:28). In the LXX πνευμα is also used with reference to a living principal or influence with certain moral or religious inclinations i.e. Ezekiel 37:14 – “I shall place my πνευμα into them, and they shall live” (Muraoka 2009:567). Marcos (2000:311) mentions that the LXX shows a predominance for the interpretation of πνευμα in the sense of anthropocentrism with an emphasis of the ethical attitude and the value of the individual in contrast to the Hebrew Bible’s emphasis on theocentrism. πνευμα also denotes a psychological state, a spiritual capacity as well as a decision of will (Makambu 2007:41). God gives man intelligence (Job 32:8) as well as the place to function psychologically (Sg 5,3; Dn 3,39.86; Tb 4:3) (Makambu 2007:41). It is interesting that in the LXX usage of πνευμα, it is also viewed as a rational or intelligent being with no material existence i.e. in Genesis 1:2 it illustrates the idea of being possessed by God (Muraoka 2009:567). In LXX Qohelet πνευμα is always reflective of an anthropological idea (Makambu 2007:42). The understanding of πνευμα in both Jewish and Greek thought as something that is both good and bad is mirrored in the LXX as the wind varies from something that is cool and refreshing (Isa 25:4), a scorching wind (Ez 13:11) or a path of wind (Ec 11:5) (Muraoka 2009:567).

5. πνευμα IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The notion of one unique Holy Spirit did not exist in the first century and consequently the earliest Christians drew from the Jewish world (Tibbs 2008:320). The early church’s experience of the spirit influenced the New Testament use of πνευμα to a fine nuance that reflects the Old Testament (Balz & Schneider 1993:118). Levison (2011:83) contends that the spirit as lifelong presence was supplanted by the New Testament’s association of spirit with a new creation. In the New Testament πνευμα is essentially characterized by the Hebrew equivalent חור and its use in Judaism (Balz & Schneider 1993:118; cf. Wood 1978:20). The manner in which πνευμα was used in the New Testament times pertain a change in the basic concept of חור (Wood 1978:20). Paul, Luke-Acts and especially John developed the understanding of πνευμα further than the Old Testament promises in various ways (Balz & Schneider 1993:119). The manner in which πνευμα was used in the Greek sense is also not visible according to Makambu²⁰ (2007:55). πνευμα is

20 “Le sens grec de pneuma n’est donc plus dans la Bible: éloigné de son étymologie et de son origine, pneuma n’est plus rattaché à l’expérience sémantique de nature du soufflé du vent, voire, à celle du souffle de la respiration” (Makambu 2007:55).

used more frequently in the New Testament and is increasingly used to refer to God and also in combination with ἅγιος “Holy” (Wood 1978:20). It is not the aim of this study to investigate the manner in which πνεῦμα is interpreted in the whole New Testament, but only to note that there is a change in the concept deriving from the Jewish world that permeates the New Testament.

6. SUMMARY OF THE BACKGROUND OF πνεῦμα

It is evident that the Jewish and Greek literature πνεῦμα differ as Jewish thought views the spirit as a person; or entity in contrast to the Greek thought that views it as a mysterious inspiration. The Greek thought is not tied to a deity, but the process of thinking or being creative is connected to πνεῦμα and accordingly there is an indirect emphasis on the human aspect. The Jewish thought is more concerned with the indwelling of the spirit of God that is existent from birth and could be experienced with prophecies. In both Jewish and Greek thought there is evidence of πνεῦμα concerning a good and bad element.

7. πνεῦμα IN JOHN 3:8

7.1 Metaphorical language

It is important to note that part of the translation problem of πνεῦμα in John 3:8 is due to the metaphorical meaning that is implied. A metaphor concerning the spirit and water is created with reference to this earthly existence and an existence in a transcendent realm i.e. physical wind and divine spirit within the framework of John 3 (Kysar 2005:195). Accordingly, this metaphor has an earthly quality that is transformed into something more (Kysar 2005:195). Beasley-Murray (1987:49) notes that in John 3:8 “Spirit” refers to the power of the God of heaven at work in the world below. The Spirit is Jesus and he is from above and is therefore mysterious to humankind from below (Brown 1966:141). Brown (1966:145), however, questions this notion, as apocalyptic seers as Daniel, Enoch and Baruch have gone up to heaven in a vision.

Haenchen (1984:201) mentions that the comparison of that what comes from above is reminiscent of the Gnostic movement¹ that believed that a true Gnostic was able to say on his behalf: I know whence I have come (viz., from God) and whither I go (to God).

7.2 Translations of John 3:8

<p>John 3:8: τὸ πνεῦμα ὅπου θέλει πνεῖ, καὶ τὴν φωνὴν αὐτοῦ ἀκούεις, ἀλλ’ οὐκ οἶδας πόθεν ἔρχεται καὶ ποῦ ὑπάγει· οὕτως ἐστὶ πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος.</p>	<p><i>English:</i> <u>NRSV:</u> John 3:8: “The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.</p>
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1 The fact that the Gospel of John was popular among Gnostics as seen in the Nag Hammadi texts like the Gospel of Thomas, does not, however, prove the Gospel of John’s affinity with their thought (Keener 2003:164).

	<p><u>GNT:</u> John 3:8: The wind blows wherever it wishes; you hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. It is like that with everyone who is born of the Spirit.</p>
	<p><u>Analytical-literal Translation:</u> John 3:8: “The Spirit breathes where He desires, and you hear His voice, <u>but</u> you do not know from where He comes and where He goes. In this manner [or, Like this] is every [one] having been born from the Spirit.”</p>
	<p><u>Common English Version:</u> John 3:8: God’s Spirit blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you don’t know where it comes from or where it is going. It’s the same with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”</p>
	<p><u>Young’s Literal Translation:</u> John 3:8: the Spirit where he willeth doth blow, and his voice thou dost hear, but thou hast not known whence he cometh, and whither he goeth; thus is every one who hath been born of the Spirit.’</p>
	<p><u>Contemporary English Version:</u> John 3:8: Only God’s Spirit gives new life. The Spirit is like the wind that blows wherever it wants to. You can hear the wind, but you don’t know where it comes from or where it is going.</p>
	<p><u>LB:</u> John 3:8: Just as you can hear the wind but can’t tell where it comes from or where it will go next, so it is with the Spirit. We do not know on whom he will next bestow this life from heaven.</p>
	<p><u>Afrikaans:</u> <u>OAV:</u> Joh 3:8: Die wind waai waar hy wil, en jy hoor sy geluid, maar jy weet nie vanwaar hy kom en waarheen hy gaan nie. So is elkeen wat uit die Gees gebore is.</p>

	<p><u>Die Boodskap:</u> Joh 3:8: Leer uit die natuur. Hoewel jy die wind hoor waai, kan jy dit tog nie beheer of stuur nie. Dit waai waar dit wil. Jy weet nie eers presies waar dit vandaan kom of waarheen dit uiteindelik waai nie. Maar nogtans waai dit! Presies dit is waar van die manier waarop die Gees werk. Elke persoon wat uit die Gees gebore word, ervaar dit ook so.</p>
	<p><u>NLV:</u> Joh 3:8: Die wind waai waar hy wil. Jy hoor sy suising, maar jy weet nie waarvandaan hy kom en waarheen hy op pad is nie. Só is dit met elkeen wat uit die Gees gebore is.</p>
	<p><u>Dutch:</u> <u>Willibroedvertaling:</u> Joh 3:8: De wind blast waarheen hij wil; gij hoort we zijn gesuis, maar weet niet waar hij vandaan komt en waar hij heen gaat; zo is het met ieder die geboren is uit de Geest.</p>
	<p><u>French:</u> <u>La Bible traduction œcuménique:</u> Joh 3:8: Le vent souffle où il veut, et tu entends sa voix, mais tu ne sais ni d'où il vient ni où il va. Ainsi en est-il de quiconque est né de l'Esprit.</p>

7.3 A viable translation of πνεῦμα in John 3:8

It is the opinion of this study that the first appearance of πνεῦμα in John 3:8 should be translated as “Spirit”. Most translations i.e. the Dutch, French, Afrikaans, NRSV, GNT and LB translate the first appearance of πνεῦμα in John 3:8 as “wind”. The French translation offers a good solution by inserting a footnote explaining that the word for wind and spirit is both πνεῦμα and that the ancients often compared the mysterious activity of the wind with the action of God. It would be the ancients’ understanding of a mysterious element, but also of a force out of human control. There aren’t any Afrikaans translations that translate πνεῦμα with “Spirit” or even try to convey the idea of “breath”. This study suggests an Afrikaans translation of John 3:8a such as: “die Gees waai waar hy wil” depicts the imagery of πνεῦμα as conveyed in Jewish understanding more accurately. The translation is still comprehensive and the metaphor of the Spirit as wind is better conveyed. The confusion regarding this text is in the opinion of this study a result of a lack of translation options that have not yet been explored in the Afrikaans translations. There is a lengthy translation in *Die Boodskap* focussed on explaining the metaphor of wind and the Spirit, but it is not more understandable than the NLV or even the OAV. The English translations such as Contemporary English Version and the Common English Version use “Spirit” which is the better translation concerning this study. It is interesting that the Analytical-literal Translation translates πνεῦμα as “Spirit breathes” that also conveys the idea of identity. It is presumed in the context

of John 3 that God's Spirit is received by those who believe in Him. It is evident that πνευμα is associated with God as all the translations use capital letters when referring to the Spirit.

8. CONCLUSION

It is evident that the meaning of πνευμα has progressed in Jewish, Greek, LXX and New Testament thought. Furthermore, πνευμα is associated with the Spirit of God and accordingly each translation of John 3:8 indicated this understanding by using capital letters. The Spirit functions as life-giving breath that indwells a person from birth to death. Jesus' last breath has enabled all believers to obtain the breath of life. Traditional Jewish language is placed in a typically Johannine idiom of faith (John 3:15, 16, 36) (Burge 1987:170). The first occurrence of πνευμα in John 3:8 should be translated as "Spirit" and not as "wind". This is supported by the historical backdrop of the interpretation of πνευμα. This translation option still needs to be explored in the Afrikaans translations.

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KEYWORDS

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TREFWOORDE

Πνευμα
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