

A Hearing God: ἐπακούω Reinvented in the LXX

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1. Introduction

- “Septuagint-theology”
 - Translating “anthropomorphisms”
 - Question of “anti-anthropomorphism” in LXX
 - God’s senses in this?
- Biblical Studies and Senses
 - Avalos (2007): “sensory criticism”
 - Avrahami (2012):

Text
Biblical texts

→
Semantic links & metaphorical language

Corporeal experiences
Senses
- Goal: how is God’s hearing translated in LXX-Pentateuch?
 - Differences MT – LXX
 - Anti-anthropomorphism present?
 - What does the language of LXX show?
 - ἐπακούω reinvented!

2. Translating God’s senses

2.1 Methodology:

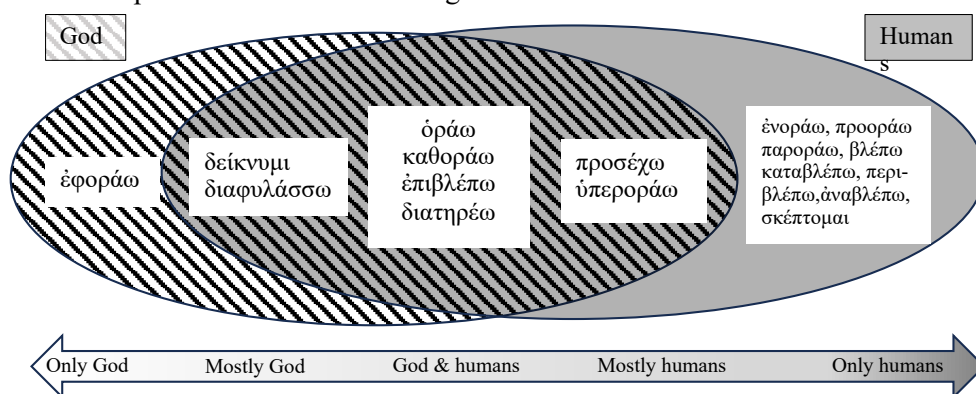
- Selection of verbs: Focus on *divine active, transitive, sensory perception*
- Comparison human & divine senses: divergence?
- Evaluation: anti-anthropomorphism?

2.2 An overview of the translation of the divine senses in LXX-Pentateuch

God’s sight

GOD’S SIGHT IN THE PENTATEUCH				
Type	Subtype	Verses	Hebrew	Greek
Affective sight	Neutral	Gen 2:19; 11:15; Ex 3:4	הָאֵל	ὁράω
	Positive	Gen 9:16; 29:31.32; 31:12.42; Ex 3:7.9; 4:31; Deut 26:7	הָאֵל	ὁράω
		Ex 2:25	הָאֵל	ἐφοράω
		Lev 26:9; Deut 9:27	פָּנָה	ἐπιβλέπω
		Num 16:15	פָּנָה	προσέχω
		Deut 26:15	הִקְשָׁה	καθοράω
		Gen 4:4	שָׁעָה	ἐφοράω
		Gen 4:5	שָׁעָה	προσέχω
	Judging	Gen 1:4.10.12.18.21.25.31; 6:5.12; 7:1; Deut 9:13; 32:19.36	הָאֵל	ὁράω (+ Gen 1:8)
		Deut 23:15	הָאֵל	ὁράω
		Deut 32:20	הָאֵל	δείκνυμι
		Ex 5:21	הָאֵל	ὁράω/ ἐφοράω
		Ex 14:24	הִקְשָׁה	ἐπιβλέπω
		Gen 31:49	פָּצָה	ἐφοράω
Effective sight	Positive:	Gen 16:13	הָאֵל	ἐφοράω
	Lifegiving	Ex 12:13.23	הָאֵל	ὁράω
	Positive: protection	Ex 34:7	נָצַח	διατηρέω/ ποιέω
Non-sight	Negative	Deut 32:10	נָצַח	διαφυλάσσω
		Deut 3:26	עָבַר	ὑπεροράω

- Comparison human & divine sight:



- No (strong) avoidance; Prefixes!

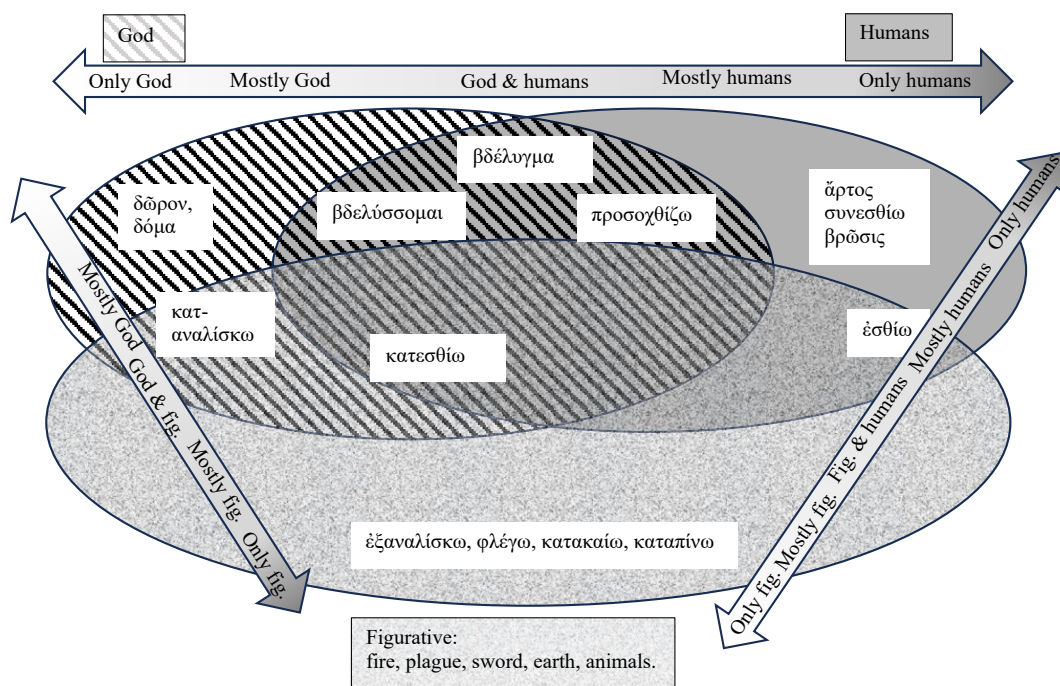
God's smelling

GOD'S SMELLING IN THE PENTATEUCH			
Type	Verses	Hebrew	Greek
"a pleasant smell"	Gen 8:21; Ex 29:18.25.41; Lev 1:9.13.17; 2:2.9.12; 3:5.16; 4:31; 6:8.14; 8:21.28; 17:6; 23:13.18; Num 15:3.7.10.13.14.24; 18:17; 28:2.6.8.13.24.27; 29:2.6.8.13.36	רִיחַ נִיחַ	ὁσμή εὐωδίας
"Smelling"	Lev 3:11; 17:4; Num 15:5; 29:11	---	ὁσμή εὐωδίας
	Gen 8:21; Lev 26:31	רוח (Hif)	ὁσφραίνομαι

God's taste/eating

GOD'S EATING IN THE PENTATEUCH			
Type	Verses	Hebrew	Greek
Eating	Num 24:8 (<i>questionable if God is subject</i>)	אכל	ἐσθίω
	Deut 4:24; 9:3		καταναλίσκω
	Lev 9:24, 10:2; Num 11:1; 16:35; Deut 32:22		κατεσθίω
	Ex 15:7		κατεσθίω
	Deut 7:22	לש	καταναλίσκω
Gnawing	Num 24:8 (<i>questionable if God is subject</i>)	גרס	ἐκμυελίζω
Disgust	Ex 8:22; Deut 7:25.26; 12:31; 17:1; 22:5; 23:19; 24:4.25.16; 27:15; 32:16	הִרְגִּיתִּי	βδέλυγμα
	Lev 26:11	לע	βδελύσσομαι
	Lev 26:30.44		προσοχθίζω
	Lev 20:23	רָקַ	βδελύσσομαι
	Lev 21:6.8.17.21.22; 22:25; Num 28:24	חל	δῶρον
Food	Lev 3:11		ὁσμή εὐωδίας
	Lev 3:16		---
			(LXX -)
	Num 28:2		δόμα

- Comparison human & divine taste/eating:

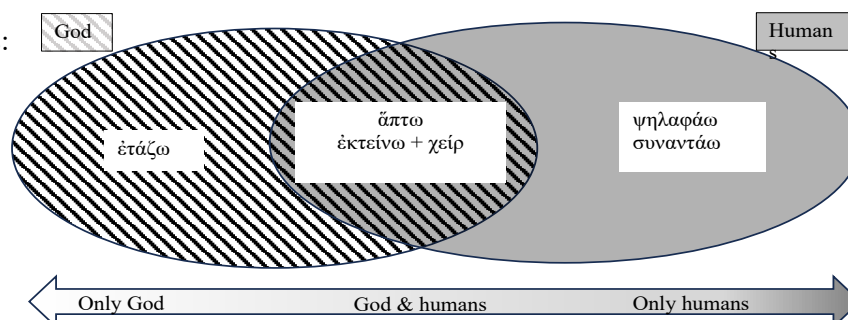


- No avoidance; "Violent glutton"; Prefixes!

God's touch

GOD'S TOUCH IN THE PENTATEUCH			
Type	Verses	Hebrew	Greek
Touching	Gen 12:17	נג	ἐτάζω
	Gen 32:33 (<i>God as man</i>)		ἄπτομαι
Meeting/touching	Ex 5:3	נגפ	συναντάω (different subject!)

- Comparison human & divine senses:

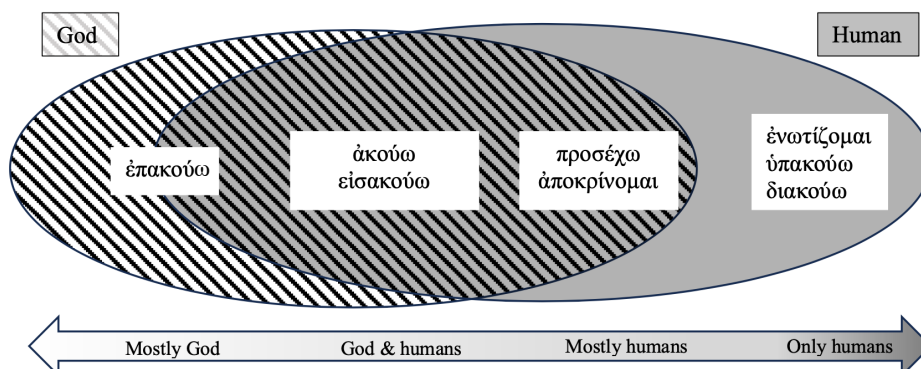


- No (strong) avoidance; No particular prefixes

God's audition

GOD'S HEARING IN THE PENTATEUCH				
Type	Subtype	Verses	Hebrew	Greek
Hearing in the broadest sense	Listening to: שמע with prepositions	Num 21:3; Deut 1:45	שמע בקול	ἐπακούω
		Gen 30:6		εἰσακούω
		Deut 3:26; 9:19; 10:10; 23:6	שמע אל	εἰσακούω
		Gen 16:11; 21:17; 30:17.22		ἐπακούω
	Hearing: שמע with objects	Gen 17:17; Ex 2:24; 6:5; 16:7.8.9.12; 22:22.26; Num 14:27; 20:16; Deut 20:7	שמע with object	εἰσακούω
		Gen 17:20		ἐπακούω
		Ex 3:7; Deut 1:34; 5:28		ἀκούω
Hearing or answering		Ex 19:19	ענה	ἀποκρίνομαι
		Gen 35:3		ἐπακούω
To give ear to		Deut 1:45	זן	προσέχω
To intellectually hear		Deut 32:10	בין	παιδεύω

- Comparison human & divine senses:



- No (strong) avoidance; Prefixes!

⇒ God's senses:

- No (strong) avoidance
- Role of prefixes?
 - Preference for spatial “height” for God? Vs humans: horizontal & “down”
 - Cf. Conceptual metaphor : height is positive and “down” more negative

3. The case of divine hearing

2.1 Divine hearing in LXX-Pentateuch

- Specific divine prefixes
- Hearing in the broadest sense: שמע
 - Gen 30:6: Rachel says that God has listened to her voice (יָקַע בְּקוֹלָהּ): ἐπήκουσεν τῆς φωνῆς μου.

Translating שמע בקול in LXX-Pentateuch			
Subject	Object heard	Greek	Verse
God	Humans	εἰσακούω	Num 21:3; Deut 1:45
		ἐπακούω	Gen 30:6
Humans	God	εἰσακούω	Ex 23:21; Num 14:22; Deut 4:30; 9:23; 15:5; 27:10; 28:1.5.45.62; 30:8.10.20
		ὑπακούω	Gen 22:18; Deut 26:14.17; 30:2
		ἀκούω	Ex 19:5; 23:22; Deut 8:20; 13:19; 28:2
Humans	Humans	εἰσακούω	Ex 4:1
		ὑπακούω	Gen 27:8.13; Deut 21:18.20
		ἀκούω	Gen 21:12; 27:43; Ex 18:19

- Gen 30:17.22: God listens to Leah and Rachel, providing them with children: ἐπακούω

Translating שמע אל in LXX-Pentateuch			
Subject	Object heard	Greek	Verse
God	Humans	εἰσακούω	Deut 3:26; 9:19; 10:10; 23:6
		ἐπακούω	Gen 21:17; 30:17.22
	Object (affliction)	ἐπακούω	Gen 16:11
Humans	God's laws, words	εἰσακούω	Deut 11:13
		ἀκούω	Deut 4:1; Deut 11:26-28; 18:19; 28:13
Humans	Humans	εἰσακούω	Gen 34:17.24; Ex 6:9.12.30; 7:4.13.22; 8:11.15; 9:12; 11:9; 16:20; Deut 13:9; 21:18; 34:9
		ὑπακούω	Gen 39:10; Deut 17:12
		ἀκούω	Gen 23:16; 28:8; 49:2; Deut 13:4

- Hearing or replying: **הגב**
 - Gen 35:3: **וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֵלָיו מִבְּרֵית הַבְּרִית**: ποιήσωμεν ἐκεῖ θυσιαστήριον τῷ θεῷ τῷ ἐπακούσαντί μοι
 - ἐπακούω for listening *and* answering in Ancient Greek
 - Important role of ἐπακούω (esp. LXX-Gen!)

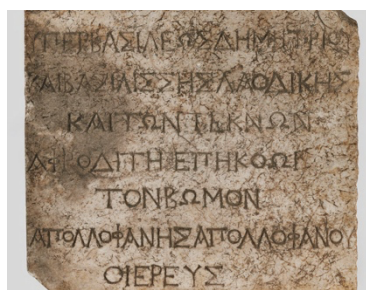
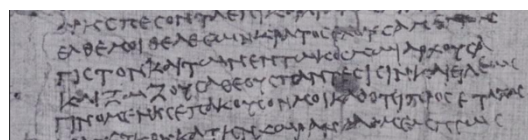
2.2 ἐπακούω in extrabiblical Greek

- ἐπακούω = “to listen to, give attention to”
 - often already implies an answer by the listener, esp. when acoustically perceived object in genitive
 - ἐπακούω is used in extrabiblical literary Greek, but also often in documentary sources
- a) as **technical term** to refer to or invoke the attentive **listening of deities** to prayers addressed to them
- God Helios described as seeing and hearing everything: πάντ’ ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ’ ἐπακούει: (Il. 3.277)
 - UPZ 1.78 (159 BCE, Memphis) to Isis and Serapis: ἐλθέ μοι θεὰ θεῶν, εἴλωες γινομένη ἐπάκουσόν μου
 - Esp. adjective ἐπήκοος, used all over the Ancient and Hellenistic Mediterranean to refer to the listening gods, attested in extensive amount of inscriptions ; also used in *defixiones*!
 - Athens, ca. 280 BCE: Σίμυλος ἦρωι // ἐπηκώωι // ὑπὲρ Λακράτου // εὐχὴν
 - Oropos, *Defixio* against Theoxenos and others, late 3rd/early 2nd c. BCE (SEG 47.510)
- b) ἐπακούω carries also a double **aural-oral dimension** to it
- Herodotus, *Histories* 4.141.1:

τοῦτον τὸν ἄνδρα καταστάντα ἐπὶ τοῦ χεῖλεος τῷ Ἰστρου ἐκέλευε Δαρεῖος καλέειν Ἰστιαῖον Μιλήσιον. ὁ μὲν δὴ ἐποίεε ταῦτα, Ἰστιαῖος δὲ **ἐπακούσας** τῷ πρώτῳ κελεύσματι τάς τε νέας ἀπάσας παρεῖχε διαπορθεύειν τὴν στρατιὴν καὶ τὴν γέφυραν ἔξευξε.
 - Some examples in documentary sources
 - **UPZ 1.81**: ‘Nectanebo’s Dream’, ca. 150 BCE Memphis (Memphites, Egypt)

ἐλθέ μοι θεὰ θεῶν, κράτος ἔχουσα μέ-
[[γιτον]] καὶ τῶν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἄρχουσα
καὶ ζώουσα θεοὺς πάντες, Ἰσιν, καὶ εἴλωες
γινομένης ἐπάκουσόν μοι.
 - **SEG 50-1462** Dedication to Aphrodite on behalf of Demetrios I Soter and his family, Syria, 159-150 BCE

ὑπὲρ βασιλέως Δημητρίου
καὶ βασιλίσσης Λαοδίκης
καὶ τῶν τέκνων
Ἀφροδίτῃ ἐπηκώωι
τὸν βωμὸν
Ἀπολλοφάνης Ἀπολλοφάνου
ὁ ἱερεύς



2.3 ἐπακούω in LXX-Pentateuch reinvented

- The translators, by opting for this highly technical term, become part of a tradition, while also carefully interpreting the Hebrew at hand!
 - The verb ἐπακούω renders perfectly the idea expressed in expressions such as שמע בקול
 - Also a hint to the surrounding traditions where ἐπακούω implies a responsive deity
 - More than simply **adopted from surroundings**: implies also a **theological accent**!

4. The role of prefixes

- Prefixes and their role in LXX-theology
 - Stipp (2015): insignificant vs Ross & Runge (2022): conceptual metaphors & development Koine
 - particular prefixes subtly mold the image of God! Theologically significant! “prefixed theology”

5. Conclusion

1. Anti-anthropomorphism?
 - Similar verbs for humans and God; Verbs for divine senses have strong sensory load
2. Interaction with context
 - Different prefixes for different contexts; word-choice blends in with Hellenistic context
3. Role of prefixes
 - Subtle depiction of God; Spatial height? (cf. conceptual metaphor); « prefixed theology »
 - Why? : Related to Diaspora? Cf. idea of heavenly temple in Hellenistic Judaism?