

Between Tradition and Innovation: God's 'long nose' as μακρόθυμος

With the growing interest in bodies within Biblical studies, also God's body received increasing attention during the last decades.¹ The so-called anthropomorphisms — i.e., the attribution of human-like body parts and, by extension, human-like emotions and activities to God — form an important part of the Biblical descriptions of God. In turn, also the Greek rendering of these anthropomorphisms in LXX has sparked interest.² Researchers such as Frankel³ and Fritsch⁴ first raised the issue of anti-anthropomorphism in LXX-Pentateuch, arguing that the Greek translators (occasionally) avoid humanlike descriptions of God. The recent discussion concerning an LXX-theology, i.e., a set of theological elements proper to the Greek translation and distinct from the MT, reopened the question of the presumed anti-anthropomorphic stance of LXX, as one of the theological accents proper to LXX.⁵

This paper addresses God's 'nose' (נָס) as one of the Pentateuchal anthropomorphisms. Yet, from the very start, a problem occurs. Indeed, נָס resides on the thin line between emotion and body part. Fohrer names נָס as one of the Hebrew words carrying a "twofold aspect":

It denotes on the one hand 'nose', on the other 'anger', and, in the dual, 'face', yet the verb נָס is found only with the meaning 'to be angry'; of course, it is possible that a basic though irrecoverable meaning 'to snort' preceded it, from which all the rest may be derived.⁶

The image of fastened respiration through the nose when one is angry, lies perhaps at the basis of the extended meaning of נָס as 'anger'.⁷ Particularly the *plural* and dual form of נָס do probably not denote anger, but refer to the physical nostrils.⁸ The *singular* נָס, instead, often used in contexts of heat with the image 'burning nose' (נָס + חרה / חרון), refers to 'anger'.⁹ This last use of נָס has been regarded as a *dead metaphor*, now fully lexicalized in its metaphoric meaning of anger.¹⁰

Accordingly, the LXX-translators had the difficult task of rendering a layered item into Greek.¹¹ Strikingly, *all* instances in the Pentateuch where God's נָס appears are translated in a consistently 'non-physical' way, by a form of ὀργή or θυμός (anger). This consistency has been understood as an anti-anthropomorphism, avoiding God's humanlike nose and replacing it by anger.¹² In what follows, I analyse and evaluate the translation of the divine 'nose' (נָס) in LXX-Pentateuch, with a special focus on μακρόθυμος for God's 'long nostrils'. First, a general overview is offered regarding the translation of the divine נָס in LXX-Pentateuch. Next, I address

¹ E.g., Wagner, *Göttliche Körper*.

² The most recent publication on the topic, with a helpful overview: Jokiranta, Mäkielto & Tucker, "Cognitive Science Meets Septuagint Studies".

³ Frankel, *Vorstudien zu der Septuaginta*.

⁴ Fritsch, *Anti-Anthropomorphisms of the Greek Pentateuch*.

⁵ Rösel, "Towards a 'Theology of the Septuagint'"; Ausloos, "You Saw no Form"; Ausloos, "Human Activities Attributed to God."

⁶ Fohrer, "Twofold Aspects of Hebrew Words", 98.

⁷ Dhorme, "L'emploi métaphorique," 530. Similarly, Fritsch, *Anti-anthropomorphisms of the Greek Pentateuch*, 13.

⁸ Amzallag, "What Are the 'Long Nostrils' of YHWH," 4; Bauer, "Wann heisst 'appayim 'Zorn'?"

⁹ Cf. Dhorme, "L'emploi métaphorique," 530. On the metaphor of God's (burning) nose: Kruger, "A Cognitive Interpretation of the Emotion of Anger;" Amzallag, "Beyond Nose and Anger;" Kim & Trimm, "Yahweh the Dragon".

¹⁰ Thomas, *Anatomical Idiom and Emotional Expression*, 184. I understand a dead metaphor in the same way Fields uses it: "A dead metaphor may be defined simply as a fixed idiom – a metaphor which has become so much a part of the language that the original impetus for its usage may even be forgotten", see: Fields, "The Translation of Biblical Live and Dead Metaphors," 194. Alm-Arvius names the lexicalization as a necessary condition for metaphor death: Alm-Arvius, "Live, Moribund and Dead Metaphors," 9, 13.

¹¹ Cf. Rösel, "Den Herrn aus ganzem Denken lieben," 153-158.

¹² E.g., Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus*, 230; Gera, "Translating Hebrew Poetry into Greek Poetry," 114; Fritsch, *Anti-anthropomorphisms of the Greek Pentateuch*, p. 14.

the adjective *μακρόθυμος* to render the expression אַרְךָ אַפִּיִם. Finally, I frame LXX’s use of *μακρόθυμος* within the broader history of Greek language, describing the Greek translators of the Pentateuch as translators between tradition and innovation.

1. Translating אַפִּיִם

First, I present an overview of the renderings of אַפִּיִם in LXX-Pentateuch, to then briefly address the possibility of anti-anthropomorphism regarding God’s nose. The translation of אַפִּיִם in the Greek Pentateuch can be resumed as follows (biblical references in **bold** refer to God):

THE TRANSLATION OF אַפִּיִם IN LXX-PENTATEUCH		
Plural (dual and plural)	<i>πρόσωπον</i>	Gen 2:7; 3:19; 19:1; 42:6; 48:12; Num 22:31
	<i>ἔχω</i>	Gen 7:22
	<i>μυκτήρ</i>	Num 11:20
	<i>ὀργή</i>	Ex 15:8; Deut 33:10
Singular without verb חרה	With dative	Gen 24:47
	<i>ὀργή</i>	Gen 27:45; Deut 29:19
	<i>θυμός</i>	Gen 49:6.7; Deut 32:22
Singular with verb חרה	<i>θυμώω</i>	Gen 30:2; 44:18; Num 11:33 , 22:27, 24:10
	<i>θυμός</i>	Ex 11:8
	<i>θυμώω</i> + <i>ὀργή</i> (dat)	Gen 39:19; Ex 4:14, 32:10.11; Num 11:1.10; Deut 7:4, 11:17
	<i>ὀργίζω</i> + <i>θυμός</i> (dat)	Ex 22:23(24); 32:19; Num 22:22, 25:3, 32:10.13; Deut 6:15; 29:26, 31:17
	<i>ὀργίζω</i>	Ex 32:22
	<i>ὀργή</i> + <i>θυμός</i>	Num 12:9; Deut 29:23
Singular with subst. חרוך	<i>ὀργή</i> + <i>θυμός</i>	Ex 32:12; Num 25:4, 32:14; Deut 13:18
Singular with subst. חמה	<i>ὀργή</i> + <i>θυμός</i>	Deut 9:1, 29:22.27
Long nostrils: אַרְךָ אַפִּיִם	<i>μακρόθυμος</i>	Ex 34:6; Num 14:18

Three elements of the Greek translation stand out: (1) the consistent absence of heat-imagery for man and God; (2) the consistent choice for *ὀργή* and/or *θυμός* for the singular אַפִּיִם; (3) and the consistent choice for *ὀργή*- or *θυμός*-related words to render the divine plural אַפִּיִם. A triple consistency is at play in LXX-Pentateuch — is this an *overconsistency*, at the cost of semantic depth?

Firstly, the ‘burning’ of the metonymic nose in expressions of anger is rendered by a form of *ὀργίζω* or *θυμώω*, with heat no longer present in the Greek.¹³ Hartman characterises this as “*appiattamento semantico*”,¹⁴ a downgrade from the rich imagery found in the Hebrew text. However, also LXX uses varied imagery, with the verb *παύω* (Ex 32:12) and the locative preposition *ἐπί* (Num 12:9; 32:14; 15; Deut 6:15; 7:4; 11:17; 29:26) depicting anger as a quite physical force needing to be ‘stopped’ or ‘turned away’ from the target (Deut 13:18). The element of heat being less present does not entail an avoidance — the reference to God’s fire is still present in association with divine anger (e.g., Num 11:1).

¹³ Hartman, *Emozioni nella Bibbia*, 113-134, 167.

¹⁴ Idem, 167.

Secondly, both for humans *and* for God, the singular **אף** is translated metonymically by *anger*, with (a form of) *θυμός* and/or *ὀργή* used interchangeably,¹⁵ suggesting that *θυμός* and *ὀργή* function more or less as synonyms.¹⁶

Thirdly, relating to LXX’s supposed anti-anthropomorphism, the consistent rendering of the divine **אִפְּיָא** (‘nose/nostrils’), by forms of *ὀργή* and/or *θυμός* is remarkable. While the human **אִפְּיָא** are translated either by *πρόσωπον* (‘face’, Gen 2:7; 3:19; 19:1; 42:6; 48:12; Num 22:31) or in a single instance by *μυκτήρ* (‘nose/nostril’, Num 11:20), the divine **אִפְּיָא** are *always* rendered by *ὀργή*- or *θυμός*-words. This consistency adopted only in the case of the divine **אִפְּיָא** is interpreted as an anti-anthropomorphic avoidance of God’s nose/nostrils.¹⁷ Others, however, argue that the Greek translators only transpose a ‘dead metaphor’ of the source language into an intelligible item in the target language.¹⁸ Exodus 15:8, where God’s **אִפְּיָא** are mentioned, forms an excellent illustration:

MT	LXX
<p>וּבְרוּחַ {ר} אִפְּיָא נָצְרוּ מִיָּם {ס} נָצְבוּ כְמוֹ-גֵד {ר} נְזִלִים; {ס} קָפְאוּ תְהוֹמַת, בְּלֶב-יָם {ס}</p>	<p>καὶ διὰ πνεύματος τοῦ θυμοῦ σου διέστη τὸ ὕδωρ· ἐπάγη ὡσεὶ τεῖχος τὰ ὕδατα, ἐπάγη τὰ κύματα ἐν μέσῳ τῆς θαλάσσης.</p>
<p>At the blast of your nostrils the waters piled up; the floods stood up in a heap; the deeps congealed in the heart of the sea (NRSV)</p>	<p>And through the breath of your wrath the water separated; the waters were congealed like a wall; the waves were congealed in the midst of the sea. (NETS)</p>

Does the plural **אִפְּיָא** (“your nostrils/wrath”) refer to God’s anger,¹⁹ or physical nostrils?²⁰ If MT is read as God separating the waters through the breath of His *nostrils*, then LXX differs in God separating the waters through the breath of His *anger* (*πνεῦμα τοῦ θυμοῦ*). The reference to God’s breath (*בְּרוּחַ*) ushers to view **אִפְּיָא** as ‘Your nostrils’, rather than ‘Your anger’; besides, how could anger function as a device separating water? The question is then: did the translators capture the underlying physical sense of ‘nostrils’ and avoid it, or did they just aim at a consistent rendering of a dead metaphor?

The plural of **אף** being at least once (Num 11:20) in the Pentateuch translated by *μυκτήρ* (nostril), instead of ‘anger’ makes it impossible to argue that the choice for *ὀργή*- or *θυμός*-words stems from a “limited understanding of **אף** as only anger”.²¹ Nonetheless, Num 11:20 (*עַד מְהַרְהָרָה יָמְרוּ אֶת-פִּיָּא, עַד אֲנִי אֶעֱלֶה אֶת-כָּל-מַיִם אֲשֶׁר-עַל-הַיָּם*) uses *μυκτήρ* with the meaning ‘until you have enough of it’. It coincides with the use of *μυκτήρ* in a quite negative sense as ‘sneering/sarcasm’ in broader Greek literature.²² Similarly, the nose-idiom used in LXX does

¹⁵ Thomas, *Anatomical Idiom and Emotional Expression*, 188.

¹⁶ Muraoka, “Pairs of Synonyms in the Septuagint of Psalms,” 39. This is different in extrabiblical Greek, where *θυμός* and *ὀργή* are distinct: Harris, “The Greek and Latin Terminology,” 53-54.

¹⁷ Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Exodus*, 230; Gera, “Translating Hebrew Poetry into Greek Poetry,” 114; Fritsch, *Anti-anthropomorphisms of the Greek Pentateuch*, 14.

¹⁸ Thomas, *Anatomical Idiom and Emotional Expression*, 189.

¹⁹ E.g., Hartman, *Emozioni nella Bibbia*, 120: “al “soffiare” della tua ira ...”

²⁰ E.g., Fritsch, *Anti-anthropomorphisms of the Greek Pentateuch*, 14; Bauer, “Wann heisst ‘appayim “Zorn”?,” 93.

²¹ Glenny, *Finding Meaning in the Text*, 135. Glenny holds this view for the translator of Amos, where this might be true: “The word “nostril” **אף** occurs 20x in the Minor Prophets and in that body of literature is always rendered ‘anger’.” For Ex 15:8, Deut 33:10, however, there are counterexamples in the Pentateuch where **אף** is *not* understood as ‘anger’.

²² The best example is perhaps the fragment attributed to Timon of Phlius, who describes Socrates as *μυκτήρ ῥητορόμυκτος*, (the sneerer who mocked at fine speeches). Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* 2.5.18 (Hicks, LCL).

not refer to anger, but rather to ‘mockery/sneering’.²³ Perhaps, then, *μυκτήρ* was not used elsewhere to render *ἤξ* because of this negative use, and the translators thought another equivalent fit better.

In fact, *θυμός* functions well as equivalent for *ἤξ*, since it not only denotes ‘anger/wrath’, but also relates to ‘breath’. Indeed, Onians has shown that in the Homeric corpus *θυμός* takes, besides various other associations, also the sense of breath (e.g.: *Iliad*, 4.522-523: *ὁ δ’ ὑπτιος ἐν κονίησι κάππεσεν ἄμφω χεῖρε φίλοις ἐτάροισι πετάσσας θυμὸν ἀποπνεύων* “and he fell backward in the dust and stretched out both his hands to his dear comrades, gasping out his *θυμός*”).²⁴ Moreover, Padel, in her survey of Greek images for emotions, observes that “the *thumos* of warring gods is “blown” in different directions” (cf. *Iliad*, 21.386).²⁵ The *θυμός* appears as something that *can be blown*, but also as a faculty that *blows* like the *wind*. Caswell has commented extensively on Homeric language, showing that *θυμός* figures also as ‘stormy wind’.²⁶ For instance, in *Iliad*, 9.4-8, *θυμός* is compared to the two great winds Boreas and Zephyr:

ὡς δ’ ἄνεμοι δύο πόντον ὀρίνετον ἰχθυόεντα Βορέης καὶ Ζέφυρος, τῷ τε Θρήκηθεν ἄητον ἐλθόντ’ ἐξαπίνης: ἄμυδις δέ τε κύμα κελαινὸν κορβύεται, πολλὸν δὲ παρέξ ἄλα φύκος ἔχευεν: ὡς ἐδαΐζετο θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσιν Ἀχαιῶν.

Just as two winds stir up the teeming deep, the North Wind and the West Wind that blow from Thrace, coming up suddenly, and immediately the dark wave rears itself in crests and casts much seaweed out along the shore, so was the *θυμός* of the Achaeans torn within their breasts.²⁷

The stirring (*ὀρίνω*) of the sea by these winds, is much similar to the stirring *θυμός* creates in one’s breast. Apart from the simile, the concept of *θυμός* as a wild, stormy wind is also used as a broader conceptual metaphor, where *θυμός* ‘blows’ (*ἄημι*), together with other images of storms, like ‘clashing’ and earthquakes (*Iliad*, 21.385-388).

Of course, the range of *θυμός*, both in extrabiblical Greek as in LXX, is wider than ‘wind’, and also extends to ‘self/will’.²⁸ Still, *θυμός* as stormy wind is particularly interesting in the evaluation of Ex 15:8. In fact, this verse seems to use the same conceptual metaphor THUMOS IS STORMY WIND in describing how God’s *θυμός* separates the waters, much like the winds Boreas and Zephyr do in the Homeric excerpt quoted before. This same image is also found in LXX-2 Sam 22:16 (= Ps 18:16). Van der Horst has shown how this image (THUMOS IS STORMY WIND) was widespread throughout Ancient and Hellenistic Greek literature.²⁹ Aeschylus³⁰ and Euripides,³¹ for instance, present people ‘blowing with anger/ *θυμός*’ and the Hellenistic letters of Aristaenetos describe a jealous man simultaneously yelling and breathing with *θυμός* (*κεκραγῶς ἄμα καὶ πνέων θυμοῦ*).³² Van der Horst then argues that the neotestamentary image of the blowing *θυμός* stems from and coincides with this extrabiblical Greek imagery, while the

²³ Thomas, *Anatomical Idiom and Emotional Expression*, 189-190: “There is a nose idiom used in Greek, but for mockery rather than anger, and this appears frequently in the LXX using the noun *μυκτήρ* or its related verb *μυκτηρίζω* with the meaning of ‘turning up the nose’ (i.e. sneering), its meaning rather like the English idiom ‘thumb the nose’.”

²⁴ Homer, *Iliad*, 4.522-523 (Murray, LCL). On this use of *θυμός*: Onians, *The Origins of European Thought about the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time and Fate*, 44-47; Caswell, *A Study of Thumos in Early Greek Epic*, 13-16.

²⁵ Padel, *In and Out of the Mind*, 28.

²⁶ Caswell, *A Study of Thumos in Early Greek Epic*. The following examples are taken from Caswell’s book.

²⁷ Homer, *Iliad*, 9.4-8 (Murray, LCL). Similar image in Homeros, *Iliad*, 2.142-146.

²⁸ Bellantuono, “Les épithètes divines dans la Septante,” 268.

²⁹ Van der Horst, “Snorting Threat and Murder”. The following examples are given by Van der Horst.

³⁰ *Choephoroi*, 391-39.

³¹ *Bacchae*, 620.

³² *Epistula*, 1.5.

image in the Old Testament stems from ‘Semitic physiology’ where anger is connected with breath.³³ Yet, in LXX-Ex 15:8, the two intertwine: both the so-called Semitic physiology where the respiratory $\eta\aleph$ functions as a metonymy for anger, and the widespread Greek imagery of $\theta\upsilon\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ as stormy wind come together in the translation of בְּרוּחַ אַפַּיִם by $\text{διὰ πνεύματος τοῦ θυμοῦ}$. In other words: this translation takes into account the double meaning of $\eta\aleph$ as anger and respiratory organ, by choosing the equivalent $\theta\upsilon\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$, denoting anger and carrying an association with wind and breathing.

Accordingly, the consistent Greek translation makes creative use of a widespread image of $\theta\upsilon\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ as wind, leaving the same ambiguity (anger or breathing?) the Hebrew text presents. The threefold consistency, then, does not tone down the semantic depth of the Hebrew, but shows signs of creative reinterpretation.

2. *Μακρόθυμος*

This brings us to the heart of this paper: *μακρόθυμος* for the expression אָרְךָ אֶפְיִם (‘magnanimous’). This expression combines אָרְךָ , ‘long’ (spatial length and temporal duration) and אֶפְיִם . Researchers debate whether the plural אֶפְיִם refers here (a) to God’s nostrils, and, in this expression, as a *lengthening* of the breathing through the nostrils,³⁴ or (b) to God’s anger, the expression referring to God taking a *long time* to get angry.³⁵ The first option is the most straightforward interpretation, as it takes into account two ideas commonly associated with אֶפְיִם and אָרְךָ , namely: “nostrils for breath and length for slowness.”³⁶ The *conceptual blending* produces the metaphorical ‘long nostrils’ which draw from the underlying general space of slow breathing.³⁷ Thus, the ‘long nostrils’ refer to a slow, and hence more calm breathing, which in turn implies a state of patience.³⁸ In the Pentateuch, this expression is reserved for God, used in two highly theological passages presenting a list of divine attributes (Ex 34:6; Num 14:18). Elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, the expression אָרְךָ אֶפְיִם is also used of humans (e.g., Prov 15:18). For all these occurrences, be it of humans or God, LXX has *μακρόθυμος*.

The (presumed) neologism *μακρόθυμος* is a compound word,³⁹ both lexemes represent the Hebrew counterparts: *μακρός* carries the same association with length, and $\theta\upsilon\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$, as was discussed before, is associated with ‘breath/wind’ and ‘anger’. Accordingly, *μακρόθυμος* renders אָרְךָ אֶפְיִם quantitatively, referring to both elements of the Hebrew, but also qualitatively, by leaving some ambiguity regarding אֶפְיִם (nose or anger?) through $\theta\upsilon\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ (breath or anger?) and transposing (at least partially) the conceptual blend into Greek. The element of God’s ‘nose’, including His breath, is then not completely avoided, but skilfully developed into a compound that represents the expression אָרְךָ אֶפְיִם .

The element $\theta\upsilon\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$, however, not only denotes ‘anger’ and ‘breath/wind’, but also ‘self/will, making it also an apt equivalent also for the polysemous רוּחַ that contains references to all three

³³ Van der Horst, “Snorting Threat and Murder,” 172.

³⁴ Bauer, ‘Wann heisst ‘appayim “Zorn”?’,” 94; Amzallag, “What Are the “Long Nostrils” of YHWH,” 4 (Amzallag understands God’s nostrils as “nozzles/tuyères”).

³⁵ Franz, *Der barmherzige und gnädige Gott*, 122.

³⁶ Atwood, *Surely it is the rûah*, 178.

³⁷ Cf. Fauconnier & Turner, *The Way We Think*, 47ff: “In blending, structure from two input mental spaces is projected into a new space, the blend. Generic spaces and blended spaces are related.”

³⁸ Atwood, “Ruling the *rûah*,” 337.

³⁹ Tov calls *μακρόθυμος* a neologism (“The Impact of the Septuagint Translation of the Torah,” 190). Aitken (“Neologisms,” 325) only labels it as a compound word, as it is used as the equivalent of two Hebrew words: However, as the word appears in non-biblical/Christian Greek only in the 4th century epigram of Palladas (*Analecta Patristica*, 11.317.1), I see *μακρόθυμος* as neologism; cf.: Atwood, “Ruling the *rûah*,” 349.

aspects as ‘spirit/wind’, ‘anger’, or ‘self’.⁴⁰ Accordingly, μακρόθυμος also aptly renders the expression הַרוּחַ הַקָּדוֹשׁ (Eccl. 7:8) and the obscure הַקָּדוֹשׁ in Prov 17:22.⁴¹ The very multivalence of θυμός probably stood out to the translators in coining μακρόθυμος.

Bellantuono’s recent study is the most complete analysis of μακρόθυμος in LXX. She carefully develops the thesis that in LXX, a semantic shift takes place from Classical Greek usage of μακροθυμία as ‘perseverance’, to the adjective μακρόθυμος denoting a ‘temporal limitation of divine anger’ (Pentateuch, Prophets), to then the broader nuance of ‘magnanimity/patience/mercy’ in Wisdom- and Jewish Hellenistic literature, where the temporal notion no longer plays a role.⁴² I hope to further develop Bellantuono’s thesis in showing how LXX does not merely change μακροθυμία from perseverance to ultimately mercy, but rather, as metaphorical blending of θυμός and μακρός, preserves its temporal aspect and could go hand-in-hand with breathing-imagery also in later (Jewish-)Hellenistic writings. I first give an outlook of μακρόθυμ-words in Classical Greek, then I turn to the neologism μακρόθυμος in LXX, to conclude with some examples of μακρόθυμος in (Jewish) Hellenistic literature.

2.1 μακρόθυμ-words in extrabiblical Greek

The adjective μακρόθυμος was probably coined by one of the LXX-translators.⁴³ While the substantive μακροθυμία appears in extrabiblical Greek, the adjective μακρόθυμος (contrary to other early-occurring adjectives containing -θυμός such as μέγθυμος) is found for the first time in LXX-Pentateuch.⁴⁴ Bellantuono and Horst provide a brief overview of μακρόθυμ-words in Classical Greek, where the semantic family is rare, especially regarding papyri and inscriptions where the term does not appear until the fourth century CE (mainly in Christian texts). The term μακροθυμία first appears in a fragment attributed to Menander,⁴⁵ next to scarce occurrences in Strabo,⁴⁶ Plutarch,⁴⁷ Artemidorus,⁴⁸ and Aretaeus.⁴⁹ Here, μακροθυμία appears as a *positive, human* quality, often in the sense of ‘perseverance/patience’. The verb μακροθυμείν, used especially often in the *Sortes Astrampsychi*,⁵⁰ carries the same meaning, referring to human perseverance in difficult circumstances. Bellantuono correctly observes that the link with anger is absent, and the contexts in which the term is found never allude to such an idea.⁵¹ Yet, neither Horst nor Bellantuono show how these ‘early’ uses of μακρόθυμ-words have a strong *quantitative, temporal aspect* that gives way to the signification of patience/endurance.⁵² Especially the contrast with antonym ὀξύθυμος (‘quick-to-anger’, also temporally defined), and the use of μακρόθυμ-words in contexts where other temporal factors are underlined, raise attention to the conceptual blending of μακροθυμία. Here, μακρός carries a temporal aspect of ‘length’, and θυμός should probably be understood as ‘self/will’ instead of ‘anger’. The blend then refers to a *temporal* extension of the will, a lengthy endurance of the self. A good illustration of this temporal aspect is the conclusion of a fable attributed to Aesop, where a

⁴⁰ Atwood, “Ruling the *ruah*,” 63.

⁴¹ Atwood, *Semantics and ‘Spirit’*, 113.

⁴² Bellantuono, “Les épithètes divines dans la Septante”.

⁴³ Tov, “The Impact of the Septuagint Translation of the Torah,” 190. Rösel believes the Exodus-translator created μακρόθυμος (“Den Herrn aus ganzem Denken lieben,” 154).

⁴⁴ Horst, “μακροθυμία,” 374-5.

⁴⁵ Fragment 549K.

⁴⁶ *Geographica* V.4.10.

⁴⁷ *Lucullus* I.514a,514c; *De Genio Socratis* 24.593F (μακροθυμείν);

⁴⁸ *Oneirocriticon* II.25.15; IV.11.14.

⁴⁹ *On the causes and signs of chronical illnesses*, I.1.2 (μακροθυμίη).

⁵⁰ *Decades* 38.10, 42.8, 81.5, 90.7.

⁵¹ Bellantuono, “Les épithètes divines dans la Septante,” 270.

⁵² Bellantuono finds this aspect only present in LXX.

thirsty pigeon rushes to drink from a cup, only to crash against the wall. The *epimythion* of the fable: ὁ λόγος δηλοῖ, ὡς πολὺ κρείττων ἢ μακροθυμία τῆς ἀλογίστου σπουδῆς καὶ ταχυτήτος:⁵³ μακροθυμία is far better than reckless haste and hurry.

2.2 μακρόθυμος in Biblical Greek

After this brief outset of the use of μακρόθυμ-words in extrabiblical Greek, the neologism μακρόθυμος in LXX is addressed. I wish to show how the translators, in coining this term, stand between tradition and innovation. The adjective is used in the Pentateuch as divine epithet, and occurs further also in prophetic and Wisdom-literature.

First, regarding *tradition*, the translators, in using the newfound μακρόθυμος, were building upon the extrabiblical tradition set out above, where especially the temporal aspect stands out. Bellantuono has illustrated particularly well how μακρόθυμος denotes a ‘temporal limitation of anger’ in the Pentateuch and Prophets (e.g., Ex 34:7; Nah 1:2-3; Jer 15:15). Bellantuono then argues that there is a shift to ‘magnanimity/patience/mercy’ (especially in Wisdom- and Hellenistic literature), where the temporal notion no longer plays a role.⁵⁴ However, a closer look to other occurrences shows how the quantitative element is still strongly present. Interestingly, antonyms of μακρόθυμος directly oppose the adjective in a *quantitative, temporal* manner: ὀλιγόψυχος is the opposite of μακρόθυμος⁵⁵ (ὀλίγος as quantitative opposite of μακρός) but also broader terms occurring near μακρόθυμος, namely ταχύς⁵⁶ or εὐθέως⁵⁷ are used as temporal opposites of the slowness implied by μακρός. Synonymous or closely related elements occurring near μακρόθυμ-words, relate to *temporal lengthiness* like μακρός does, such as εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα,⁵⁸ ἕως καιροῦ,⁵⁹ πολὺς χρόνος,⁶⁰ ἀναμένω,⁶¹ βραδύνω,⁶² or even God’s eternity (ἡμέρα αἰῶνος).⁶³ Also the aspect of mercy underlined by Bellantuono appears less clearly; the semantic field of ‘mercy’ appears as extension of the temporal lengthiness, instead of a semantic shift. Significant, for instance, is deutero-canonical 2 Mac 6:13-14 where one would expect (if a semantic shift occurs in later, Hellenistic writings), the verb μακροθυμέω applied to God to imply mercy/forgiveness. Instead, we read:

καὶ γὰρ τὸ μὴ πολὺν χρόνον ἔασθαι τοὺς δυσσεβοῦντας, ἀλλ’ εὐθέως περιπίπτειν ἐπιτίμοις, μεγάλης εὐεργεσίας σημεῖόν ἐστιν. οὐ γὰρ καθάπερ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἐθνῶν ἀναμένει μακροθυμῶν ὁ δεσπότης μέχρι τοῦ καταντήσαντας αὐτοὺς πρὸς ἐκπλήρωσιν ἁμαρτιῶν κολάσαι

In fact, it is a sign of great kindness not to let the impious alone for long but to punish them immediately. For in the case of the other nations the Lord **waits patiently to punish** them until they have reached the full measure of their sins (NETS)

The element of *temporal lengthiness* is what connects the uses of μακρόθυμ-words throughout time, and forms the *tradition* upon which μακρόθυμος as ‘slow to anger’ was built.

⁵³ Fable 8.10.

⁵⁴ Bellantuono, “Les épithètes divines dans la Septante,” 279.

⁵⁵ Prov 14:29.

⁵⁶ Sir. 5:11.

⁵⁷ 2Mac. 6:13-14.

⁵⁸ Job 7:16.

⁵⁹ Sir. 1:23

⁶⁰ 2Mac 6:13.

⁶¹ 2 Mac 6:14.

⁶² Sir. 35:19.

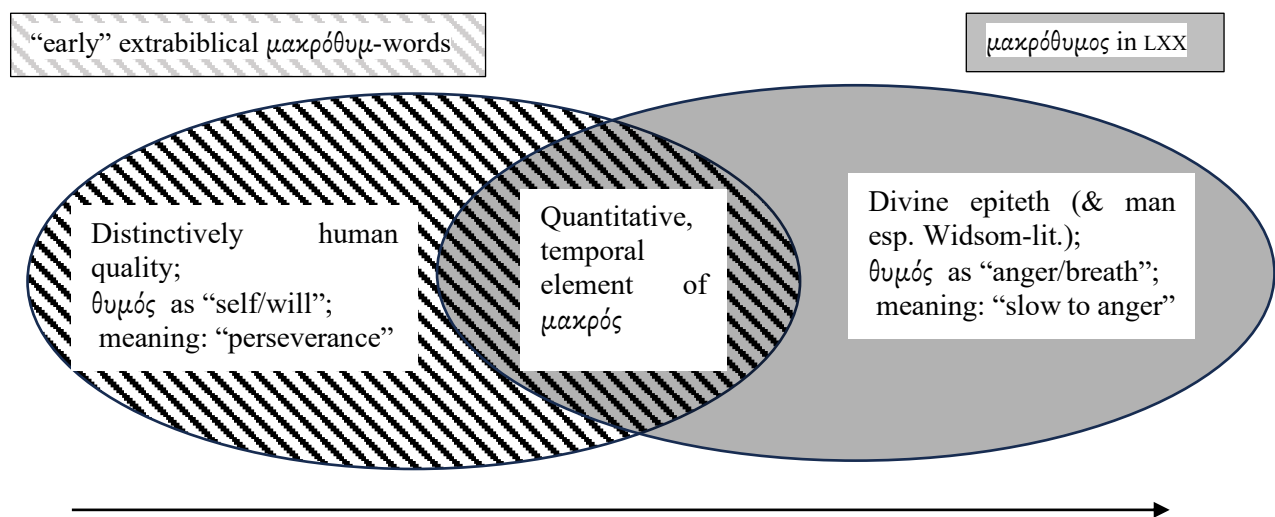
⁶³ Sir 18:10-11.

In coining *μακρόθυμος*, also a threefold *innovation* takes place. First of all, contrary to the ‘early’ extrabiblical attestations of *μακρόθυμ*-words as a *human quality*, the adjective *μακρόθυμος* when it first occurs in the Pentateuch is a distinctly *divine attribute*, not used of humans in the Pentateuch.⁶⁴ In later LXX-books, *μακροθυμ*-words are used of humans *and* God. Secondly, the element *θυμός* should not be (solely) understood as ‘self/will’ as is the case in the extrabiblical examples above, but rather as ‘anger/breath’, as argued before. Accordingly, the temporal, quantitative element *μακρός* no longer applies to self/will, with ‘perseverance’ as result,⁶⁵ but forms a metaphorical blend with the ambivalent *θυμός* (anger/breath), implying the image of slow breathing and temporal limitation of anger. Thirdly, with this temporal element, another element appears: the notion of *control*. The concept *θυμός* is imagined in the Pentateuch as a force targeting someone and needing to be ‘stopped’ (Ex 32:12) or ‘turnt away’ from the target (Deut 13:18). In the use of *μακρόθυμος* in Wisdom-literature, the same notion of anger-retention appears.⁶⁶ A good illustration is Prov 16:32:

κρείσσων ἀνὴρ μακρόθυμος ἰσχυροῦ,
ὁ δὲ κρατῶν ὀργῆς κρείσσων καταλαμβανομένου πόλιν.

A man who is *slow to anger* is better than the mighty,
and he who *controls his temper* better than who captures a city (NETS).

Horst views this notion of anger-control as a possible influence of (indigenous) Egyptian ethics which underline the notion of anger-retention.⁶⁷ In a threefold way, then, *μακρόθυμος* contains a novelty that distinguishes the adjective from other *μακρόθυμ*-words in extrabiblical literature, with the quantitative, temporal element as common ground. It could be resumed as follows:



⁶⁴ The substantive *μακροθυμία* nor the verb *μακροθυμέω* are used in the Pentateuch, hence not applied to humans either.

⁶⁵ 1 Mac 8:4 appears as an exception, with the extrabiblical ‘endurance’ rather than ‘slowness to anger’ implied by *μακρόθυμος*.

⁶⁶ E.g., Prov 15:18; Ps 7:12.

⁶⁷ Horst, “*μακροθυμία*,” 377. See for examples Erman, *Die Religion der Ägypter*, 162: “Bei allem Streit und Hader mit deinen Feinden vertraue nicht auf dich selbst, sondern *setze dich in die Arme Gottes, so wird dein Schweigen* (d.h. deine Zurückhaltung) *die Gegner schon zu Falle bringen*. Und ein andermal heißt es ähnlich: laß dich in keinen Zank mit einem Hitzigen ein; *Gott wird ihm zu antworten wissen*.” Another example is offered by Köhler (“Royal Rage and Private Anger in Ancient Egypt,” 95) from *Teaching of Ani B 22:8–9: whnn³y-kčnr³mb³.t-kknt.ø{r}wpi³.t-k* “Control your temperament so that your angry behaviour does not condemn you”.

In sum, the coining and use of the neologism *μακρόθυμος* show a translator standing between tradition and innovation.

2.3 *μακρόθυμος* in ‘intertestamental literature’

Next, I show how LXX’s understanding of *μακρόθυμος* transpires later Greek uses of the term, paying special attention to so-called ‘intertestamental literature’. In fact, Bellantuono has proposed that in this literature the semantic shift from ‘perseverance’ to ‘slow to anger’ to, ultimately, ‘mercy’ is visible.⁶⁸ Referring to *Joseph and Aseneth* (11:10; 12:15) and the *Aristeas-letter* (§188), Bellantuono shows how *μακροθυμία* ultimately becomes synonymous to *ἐπιείκεια* (clemence). One could also refer to the increasing use of the verb *μακροθυμέω* paired with the preposition *ἐπί* in Sirach, as well as the *Test. Job*,⁶⁹ and especially in neotestamentary Greek,⁷⁰ implying mercy/*μακροθυμία* to be poured out ‘upon’ others, instead of anger-retention. While such semantic extension is certainly present in these texts, it remains difficult to speak of a consistent semantic shift. Indeed, two examples of *μακρόθυμ*-words in other ‘intertestamental literature’ indicate how the notion of *temporality* and the closely related concept of *anger-retention* remain well present.

The first example, found in *Pap. Oxyrhynchus* 3.403 (Egypt, 4th c. CE) is a Greek fragment of the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch, an intertestamental pseudepigraphic. It warns one not to be happy or boastful, for the following reason:

[... γαρ εν] καιρω εξύπνισθησεται
[προς σε η οργη η νυν υπο τ]ης μακροθυμ[ι-]
[ας ως χαλινω κατεχεται ...]

... For assuredly in its season shall the wrath be awakened against thee,
Which is now restrained by long-suffering as it were by a rein...⁷¹

In this fragment, the notion of anger-retention is clearly present: *μακροθυμία* functions as a reign that holds back an outburst of (divine) anger. One could, of course, object that this fragment is too late to be counted as part of intertestamental literature. However, it has been shown that the *Oxyrhynchus*-text is very close to the presumed Greek *Vorlage* of the early-dated Syriac Apocalypse.⁷²

The next example is a cluster of *μακρόθυμ*-words in the pseudepigraphical *Testaments of the Patriarchs*, where temporality and anger-retention play a role. *Test. Dan* 2.1 reads:

ἐὰν μὴ διαφυλάξητε ἑαυτοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ψεύδους καὶ τοῦ
θυμοῦ καὶ ἀγαπήσητε τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ τὴν μακροθυμίαν, ἀπολείσθε

If you do not guard yourselves against the spirit of falsehood and anger (*θυμός*), and love truth and forbearance (*μακροθυμία*), you will perish.⁷³

⁶⁸ Bellantuono, “Les épithètes divines dans la Septante,” 279-280.

⁶⁹ Sir 18:11; 35:19 ; *T. Job* 11.10.

⁷⁰ E.g., Matt 18:29 ; Luc 18:7.

⁷¹ Greenfèll & Hunt, *Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, 5-6.

⁷² Monferrer, “Reconstrucción de un texto siriaco perdido”. The Syriac corresponding [υπο τ]ης μακροθυμ[ι-]: ܕܘܡܝܘܬܐ, lit. ‘in lengthy spirit’.

⁷³ Kee, “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” 808.

The parallelism between guarding oneself against the spirit of anger and the love for μακροθυμία, similar to the parallelism of casting away lies and loving truth, suggests that anger retention is still in some form present.⁷⁴ Next, *Test. Gad* 9.5.1 proclaims:

τὸ γὰρ πνεῦμα τοῦ μίσους διὰ τῆς ὀλιγοψυχίας συνεργεῖ τῷ
σατανᾶ ἐν πᾶσιν εἰς θάνατον τῶν ἀνθρώπων· τὸ δὲ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀγάπης
ἐν μακροθυμίᾳ συνεργεῖ τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς σωτηρίαν ἀνθρώπων.

For among all men the spirit of hatred works (πνεῦμα τοῦ μίσους) by Satan through human frailty (διὰ τῆς ὀλιγοψυχίας) for the death of mankind; but the spirit of love (πνεῦμα τῆς ἀγάπης) works by the Law of God through forbearance (ἐν μακροθυμίᾳ) for the salvation of mankind.⁷⁵

The problem here is how the ‘spirit of hate’ *immediately* condemns: ἐὰν γὰρ πταίση ὁ ἀδελφός, εὐθύς θέλει ἀναγγεῖλαι πᾶσι, καὶ σπεύδει ἵνα κριθῆ περὶ αὐτῆς καὶ κολασθεῖς ἀποθάνῃ (For if a brother makes a false step, *immediately* it wants to spread the tale to everyone, and is *eager* to have him condemned for it, punished, and executed).⁷⁶ The ὀλιγοψυχία, with the quantitative ὀλίγος refers here to hastened, hateful judgements, against the slowness of μακροθυμία. Remarkable too is the use of πνεῦμα (‘breath/spirit’). Does it relate to the extended understanding of θυμός as breath? A more explicit use of breath-imagery in combining πνεῦμα and μακροθυμία is attested in Shepherd of Hermas, *Mand.* 5.1.1-4, where the Holy Spirit (πνεῦμα ἅγιον) is suffocated (πνίγεται) by the evil spirit (πνεῦμα πονηρός), and only dwells in μακροθυμία (referring here also to a lengthened breath?), but feels suffocated (στενοχωρεῖται) in ὄξυχολία. This breath-related nuance, however, remains doubtful. These examples do illustrate how the association of μακροθυμία with anger-retention and temporality remains (at least partially) present.

3. Conclusion

Having addressed the translation of God’s ἡξ in LXX-Pentateuch, with a special focus on μακρόθυμος, the following conclusions can be reached:

- (1) The multivalence of θυμός as ‘anger’, ‘breath’, ‘self’ makes it an especially valuable equivalent for ἡξ. The LXX makes use of widespread Greek imagery, and can be regarded as a skilful translation rather than a mere transposition of a ‘dead metaphor’ into the target language;
- (2) Considering the polysemous nature of θυμός entails perceiving the translation as more than a merely non-literal translation aiming to avoid the rather physical μυκτήρ. The consistent non-physical translation of God’s ἡξ cannot be seen as an anti-anthropomorphism;
- (3) The LXX-neologism μακρόθυμος further develops the quantitative and temporal notion of the Classical μακροθυμία and infuses it with the notion of anger control, leaving a trace in later Jewish-Hellenistic literature.

I tried not only to shed a light LXX’s supposed anti-anthropomorphism, but also to further develop Bellantuono’s thesis in showing how LXX does not merely change μακροθυμία from perseverance to mercy, but rather, as a metaphorical blending of θυμός and μακρός, projects the

⁷⁴ Idem in *Test. Dan* 6.8-9.

⁷⁵ Kee, “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” 815.

⁷⁶ Idem, 815.

quantitative-temporal aspect on θυμός, fusing this notion with temporality as ‘anger-retention’. The LXX-translators use past imagery, reinvent and leave a trace – translators between tradition and innovation.

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