From Cosmogony to Psychology: Philo's Interpretation of Gen 2:7 in *De opificio mundi*, *Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesin* and *Legum allegoriae*

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1 Introduction

Καὶ ἔπλασεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον χοῦν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐνεφύσησεν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ πνοὴν ζωῆς, καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν.  

And the Lord God made man from the dust of the earth, breathing into him the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

Gen 2:7

Philo treats the first chapters of Genesis on three occasions: once in *De opificio mundi*, once in *Quaestiones et solutiones in Genesin* and once in *Legum allegoriae*. Gen 2:7 is thus mentioned in one work of each of the three exegetical corpora. In many other treatises, Philo incorporates exegeses of Gen 2:7 into interpretations of other topically or structurally similar biblical texts. I will not deal with these here as Tobin has already done a good job in identifying and

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1 A. Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta: Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta lxx interpretes* (9th ed.; Stuttgart 2006). The translators of the Septuagint used the term ψυχὴ ζῶσα (for nefesh hayyah) to denominate the living being rather than the soul, see M. Alexandre, *Le commencement du livre Genèse 1–v: La version grecque de la Septante et sa réception* (Paris 1988), 147, with many supporting passages. Later readers of the Septuagint such as Philo himself understood ψυχὴ ζῶσα here and elsewhere as a statement about the soul (Alexandre, *Commencement*, 162).—This paper profited from the discussion at the TBN meeting in Groningen, 9–10 September 2010. I am very grateful to Gabriela Ryser who took great pains to improve the English of this paper.

2 Traditionally, Philo's exegetical oeuvre is divided into three main groups, see e.g., S. Sandmel, *Philo of Alexandria: An Introduction* (Oxford 1979), 29–81.

3 *De confessione linguarum; De fuga et inventione; De mutatione nominum; De plantatione; De somniis; Quis rerum divinarum heres sit; Quod deterior potiori insidari solet; De specialibus legibus; De virtutibus*. On this topic, see T. Tobin, *The Creation of Man: Philo and the History of Interpretation* (CBQMS 14; Washington 1983), esp. 23–24, 31.
comparing them, noting differences and similarities and links with trends in Greek philosophy. Nor will I tackle the question of a possible development in the different interpretations of Genesis with which Tobin deals, or answer the question of what Philo meant by πνεῦμα. As a philologist I will only approach Philo’s use of the term πνεῦμα in the context of his interpretation of Gen 2:7. This paper will examine the question of whether the context of each exegetical corpus determines the interpretation of Gen 2:7, noting similarities and dissimilarities and attempting to determine the reasons for the latter. In relation to the origin of the similarities, the answer seems simple: from the Jewish tradition of exegesis.

2  \textit{De opificio mundi}^{5}

As the title indicates, in \textit{De opificio mundi}, Philo provides an interpretation of Gen 1–2, which exhibits patterns of Platonic philosophy and arithmology.\textsuperscript{6} In \textit{Opif.} 129, Philo begins with the account of Gen 2, using allegory to elucidate the story of the Fall and the expulsion from paradise.

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4 On this topic, see H. Leisegang, \textit{Die vorchristlichen Anschauungen und Lehren vom ineyma und der mystisch-intuitiven Erkenntnis} (vol. 1.1 of \textit{Der heilige Geist: Das Wesen und Werden der mystisch-intuitiven Erkenntnis in der Philosophie und Religion der Griechen}; ed. H. Leisegang; Leipzig 1919; repr., Darmstadt 1967). Some preconceptions (such as the “brightness” of the Greek against the “darkness” of the Orient) are outdated, but the main part of the book, the interpretation of Philo’s use of πνεῦμα, is still worth reading. See also G.H. van Kooten, \textit{Paul’s Anthropology in Context: The Image of God, Assimilation to God, and Tripartite Man in Ancient Judaism, Ancient Philosophy and Early Christianity} (\textit{wunt} 232; Tübingen 2008), 62–68, 275–282.

5 On the exegetical corpus, the exposition of the law, to which \textit{De opificio mundi} belongs, see Sandmel, \textit{Introduction}, 47–76; P. Borgen, \textit{Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for His Time} (Leiden 1997), 46–79; D.T. Runia, introd., trans. and comm., \textit{Philo of Alexandria: On the Creation of the Cosmos according to Moses} (\textit{PACS} 1; Leiden 2001), 5–8; Borgen, \textit{Exegete}, 46, calls it a “Rewritten Bible.” Concerning \textit{De opificio mundi} proper, see Runia, \textit{Creation}. On \textit{Opif.} 134–147, see Runia, \textit{Creation}, 321–347. The importance of Plato, especially of the Timaeus, is demonstrated by the same author (D.T. Runia, \textit{Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato} [Leiden 1986], 334–340).—Philo’s opinion about the temporality or non-temporality of creation varies: in explaining Gen 2:7 he assumes that creation is a temporal event by declaring Adam the first man, the “progenitor of humankind” (\textit{Opif.} 136); in explaining Gen 1, he rejects the temporality of creation (\textit{Opif.} 13, 26).