The semantic field of the Hebrew word נֶפֶשׁ in the OT[1]

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Abstract

The Hebrew anthropological term נֶפֶשׁ occurs 754 times in the Old Testament. It was rendered stereotypically as ψυχή in the LXX and later into English as 'soul'. The later was viewed as a poor translation since it motivated Christians to develop a dichotomous conception of the human constitution. This has led to centuries-old controversy concerning the Hebraic conception of the person. Although the word נֶפֶשׁ is as hard to define as it is to translate, this article aims to determine its semantic field through a brief literature review of נֶפֶשׁ and its Greek equivalent ψυχή. The result indicates that the meanings of נֶפֶשׁ in the OT are more related to the physical aspects of human beings and that its translation as 'soul' calls for re-examination.

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SATS
Bible-based. Christ-centred. Spirit-led.

1. Introduction

The word נֶפֶשׁ, occurring 754 times in the MT[3] of the OT, is 'as hard to define as it is to translate' (Jacob 1974, 9:617). For instance, KJV renders it variously as follows: 'soul' (475 times); 'life' (120 times); 'person' (26 times); a reflexive pronoun (20 times); 'heart' (16 times); 'mind' (15 times); 'creature' (ten times); the personal pronoun (nine times); 'dead' (five times); 'body, dead body, pleasure' (four times each); 'desire, will' (three times each) 'man, thing, beast, appetite, ghost, lust' (two times each); 'breath' (once), and so on. In 14 cases, KJV gives no English equivalents for נֶפֶשׁ (Murtonen 1958:9–10). In the example of its lexical meaning, DCH regards the sense of נֶפֶשׁ in Psalm 23:3 as belonging to the category of 'soul, heart, mind' (Clines 2001, 5:725), which contradicts its rendering as a 'whole person' in TDOT (Seebass 1998, 9:510). In fact, the DCH offers twelve[4] different lexical meanings of נֶפֶשׁ, the TDOT only six meanings.[5]

Such differences may result from the fact that lexicographers get their meanings from different existing sources, such as those found in grammar books and various translations (Silva 1994:137). This implies that lexical meaning is profoundly affected by the lexicographers' choice of references (e.g. different versions of translations) and that correct translations are essential for compiling lexicons. Furthermore, the accuracy of translation is indispensable for correct interpretation of the Bible. For example, the translations of the Hebrew anthropological term נֶפֶשׁ, rendered stereotypically as ψυχή in the LXX and later into English as 'soul', have been motivating Christians, influenced by Greek philosophy, to develop a dichotomous conception of the human constitution. This has led to centuries-old controversy concerning the Hebraic conception of the person (Murphy 2006:17). Murphy (ibid.:36) points out that 'most of the dualism that has appeared to be biblical teaching has been a result of *poor translation*' (italics added). Considering the *poor translation* of נֶפֶשׁ as 'soul' already in the 16th century, Parkhurst (1778:408) argues,

> נֶפֶשׁ hath been supposed to signify the *spiritual part* of man, or what we commonly call his *soul*: I must for myself confess, that I can find no passage where it hath *undoubtedly* this meaning.

Briggs (1897:30) also argues that 'soul in English usage at the present time conveys usually a very different meaning from נֶפֶשׁ in Hebrew'. Brueggemann (1997:453) points out that it is 'unfortunate that "living being" (נֶפֶשׁ) is commonly rendered "soul"'.

6   In Chinese Union Version (CUV), נֶפֶשׁ is rendered as '靈魂 líng hún (spirit-soul)' 23 times or '靈 líng (spirit)' four times. This is criticised by Watchman Nee (2006[1928]:28-29) who argues that '魂 hún (soul)' is the only meaning of נֶפֶשׁ. CUV is the most popular, authoritative and influential Bible version in contemporary Chinese Christian communities (Zhuāng 2010:41).

7   Green (2009, 5:359; 2008:32-33) notes that biblical studies and neuroscience are two fronts that query the traditional body-soul dualism. The former 'almost unanimously supported a unitary account of the human person' since the early 20th century. The latter, since the 1600s, had evidenced repeatedly 'the close mutual interrelations of physical and psychological occurrences, documenting the neural correlates of the various attributes traditionally allocated to the soul'.

Chinese Christian scholars are not exempted from this kind of controversy. For example, Watchman Nee (1903–72), the most influential figure in the Chinese Christian community of the 20th century (Zēng 2011:161), misconstrues the principle of literal translation and thus maintains that נֶפֶשׁ as '魂 hún (soul)'[6] is the only appropriate rendering. This is one of the reasons that leads to his teaching on tripartite anthropology (Nee 2006[1928]:47–48), which is a dominant perspective very much alive in the church in China today (Xú 2013:39). A good majority of Chinese Christians are directly or indirectly influenced by Nee's theology (Lǐ 2004:309). In his two crucial works, *The Spiritual Man* and *The Release of the Spirit*, Nee asserts that Christians should subjugate the soul and the body so that the spirit can be released. This gives rise to the negative attitude towards this world among Chinese Christians and leads to extensive controversy among contemporary Chinese theologians (Zēng 2011:160, 162).

The foregoing cases verify Eugene A Nida's argument (1952:65–66): if the Hebrew נֶפֶשׁ is consistently rendered as 'soul', it will ignore the literary or situational context. Diminishing the word's wealth of referents (e.g. breath, life, mind, living thing, person, self) leads to inaccurate interpretation and misunderstanding.

Nowadays, the majority of biblical scholars agree that 'at least the earlier Hebraic scriptures know nothing of body-soul dualism' (Murphy 2006:17).[7] This can be traced back to John Laidlaw's proposition (1895:58) that '[t]he antithesis soul and body...is absent from the Old Testament'. H Wheeler Robinson (1926:69) also maintains that 'the Hebrew conception of personality on its psychological side is distinctly that of a unity, not of a dualistic union of soul (or spirit) and body'. Three decades after Robinson writing, C Ryder Smith (1951:3) observed that 'some recent psychologists seem to teach that the Hebrew was right in emphasizing the unity of man'. Owen (1956:167) notes that נֶפֶשׁ 'has scarcely any of the connotations of the word "soul" in radical body–soul dualism'. In his interpretation of Genesis 2:7, Brueggemann (1997:453; see also Laurin 1961:132; Laidlaw 1895:53) notes that '[t]he articulation of "breathed on dust" in order to become a "living being" [נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה] precludes any dualism'. Amos Ḥakham (2003:29; see also Di Vito 1999:228) suggests that נֶפֶשׁ 'always refers to the body and soul as a single unit', rather than 'soul' only.

Given the significance of correct translation, this article conducts a brief literature review of נֶפֶשׁ in order to determine its semantic

field. The following sections are dedicated to fulfilling the purpose through (1) the discussion on etymological issues, (2) a brief survey of the etymological study of נֶפֶשׁ, (3) the exploration of נֶפֶשׁ in the Hebrew OT, and (4) נֶפֶשׁ and its Greek equivalent ψυχή in the LXX and the NT.

2. Etymological issues

Etymological study has played an important role in the determination of words' meaning in the Hebrew OT, especially when the OT contains no less than 1,300 *hapax legomena* and 'about 500 words that occur only twice out of a total vocabulary of about 8,000 words' (Silva 1994:42; see also Eng 2011:27; Carson 1996:33). But in the past decades many have pointed out the dangers of uncritically deriving meaning from etymology (Barr 1961, Ch. 6; Silva 1994, Ch. 1; Carson 1996:28–33). As Vendryes (2013[1925]:176) argues in his *Language: a linguistic introduction to history*:

> Etymology…gives a false idea of the nature of a vocabulary for it is concerned only in showing how a vocabulary has been formed. Words are not used according to their historical value. The mind forgets—assuming that it ever knew—the semantic evolutions through which the words have passed. Words always have a *current* value, that is to say, limited to the moment when they are employed, and a *particular* value relative to the momentary use made of them.

Put simply, etymology is not a reliable or an appropriate approach in determining the meaning of a word (Carson 1996:32).[8] This echoes Ferdinand de Saussure's arguments (1986:81):

> The first thing which strikes one on studying linguistic facts is that the language user is unaware of their succession in time: he is dealing with a state. Hence the linguist who wishes to understand this state must rule out of consideration everything which brought that state about, and pay no attention to diachrony.[9] Only by suppressing the past can he enter into the state of mind of the language user. The intervention of history can only distort his judgment.[10]

Silva (1994:42) points out that '[t]he relative value of [the] use of etymology varies inversely with the quantity of material available for the language'. That means, while lacking comparative material, the determination of the meaning of the *hapax legomena* in the OT

[8] Though etymology is 'a clumsy tool' for discerning meaning, Carson (1996:33) suggests, it is critical in the diachronic study of words, in the study of cognate languages, and in the understanding on the meanings of *hapax legomena*, etc.

[9] Of Saussure's influences upon the field of biblical studies, one is that he pioneers 'the distinction between 'diachrony' (the history of a term) and 'synchrony' (the current use of a term)' (Osborne 2006:87; see also Eng 2011:13). For Saussure (1986:90), the synchronic viewpoint has the priority to define a word's meaning. For full discussions on synchronic and diachronic linguistics, see Saussure 1986, part II and part III.

[10] Osborne (2006:87) observes that 'Saussure did not deny the validity of etymology together; rather, he restricted it to its proper sphere, the history of words'.

heavily relies on etymological study even if 'specification of the meaning of a word on the sole basis of etymology can never be more than an educated guess' (Carson 1996:33). Since נֶפֶשׁ occurs 754 times in the MT, etymology has little value for discerning its meanings according to Silva noted above. In brief, the meanings of נֶפֶשׁ gleaned from etymological considerations are nothing but 'an educated guess', which call for re-examination.

Silva (1994:43) observes that OT scholars have spent 'a remarkable amount of energy searching for cognates and proposing new meanings'. Thus, a brief survey of the etymological study on נֶפֶשׁ is helpful for understanding its divergent translations in various Bible versions and dictionaries.

3. A brief survey of the etymological study on נֶפֶשׁ

נֶפֶשׁ has many cognates in the Semitic languages, among which Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Arabic cast most light on Hebrew usage (Fredericks 1997, 3:133).

The corresponding Akkadian word for נֶפֶשׁ is *napištu*, which means (1) neck, throat, gullet, (2) life, (3) living being, self, (4) person, (5) living, livelihood, subsistence, (6) sustenance,[11] (7) slaves, domestic animals, (8) corpse, (9) breath, (10) any kind of opening, neckerchief, (11) capital case (cf. Tawil 2009:244–246; Black, George and Postgate 2000:239; Brotzman 1987:203–206).

In Ugaritic, the word *npš* is cognate to נֶפֶשׁ. It means (1) throat, (2) appetite, (3) person, people (collectively), (4) soul, (5) funerary monument, stela,[12] (6) offering (Gordon 1998:446; Brotzman 1987:206–207).

The Arabic equivalent for נֶפֶשׁ is *nas*, whose meanings comprise (1) soul, mind, (2) inclination, (3) life, (4) person, self (Waltke 1999:588).[13]

This short investigation of cognates of נֶפֶשׁ in the Semitic languages provides one of the reasons why נֶפֶשׁ is sometimes rendered so differently in various Bible versions or dictionaries. The composition of the Bible versions and dictionaries is probably influenced by the extent to which etymology is applied. This seems to account for the divergence in the meaning of נֶפֶשׁ between TDOT and DCH (see footnote 1, 2). For example, TDOT does not include the sense of נֶפֶשׁ as sustenance, perfume, funerary monument; but DCH does.

11 According to his observation on the usage of the Akkadian term *napištu* as sustenance, Hurowitz (1997:52) maintains that נֶפֶשׁ in Isa 58:10 has the same sense. However, as discussed above, etymological studies is not an appropriate approach in determining a word's meaning, especially for a word with many occurrences, such as נֶפֶשׁ.

12 נֶפֶשׁ as a funerary monument is not a biblical usage. It seems to originate in some pagan cult and the whole idea is foreign to Judaism. 'In post-biblical times it was mentioned only three times in the Mishna' (Gottlieb 1976:80).

13 Both Ugaritic *npš* and Akkadian *napištu* have the meaning 'throat'. But this is not the case in Arabic *nas* (Waltke 1999:588).

As mentioned above, while etymological considerations can be of interest, they often represent nothing more than 'an educated guess'. Thus, a better way to find out what נֶפֶשׁ means in the Hebrew OT is to examine its usage in the Hebrew OT (Tomas 1986:3). This semantic approach is the enterprise to which the present study now turns.

4. נֶפֶשׁ in the Hebrew OT

4.1 Introduction

The Hebrew word נֶפֶשׁ is a key term in the OT. נֶפֶשׁ is probably 'a primitive noun that does not derive from a verbal root' (Seebass 1998, 9:498).[14] It is feminine; Zimmerli (1979:289) regards the masculine plural נְפָשִׁים in Ezekiel 13:20 as an obvious mistake. In the OT text, this word has various meanings, including 'breath, 'living creature', 'person', 'life', 'appetite', 'corpse'. Though it can be utilised to refer to animals or God, over 700 of its appearances refer to man (Tomas 1986:1). As noted above, 'soul' is an unfortunate, poor translation of נֶפֶשׁ. Then, what does נֶפֶשׁ mean in the OT?

4.2 נֶפֶשׁ as breath

The basic, concrete meaning of נֶפֶשׁ in the OT is probably 'breath'[15] (Waltke 1999:588; Fredericks 1997, 3:133). While interpreting נֶפֶשׁ, 'the Hebraic trait of thinking concretely must be kept foremost in mind' (Warne 1995:62). Instead of abstract soul, Wolff (1974:10) notes that נֶפֶשׁ is 'designed to be seen together with the whole form of man, and especially with his breath'. For example, Genesis 35:18 describes Rachel's physical death right after giving birth to a son with great difficulty as 'the going out of the נֶפֶשׁ, that is, the breath' (Brotzman 1987:146). In 1 Kings 17:21–22, after Elijah's prayer to raise the widow's son, the child's נֶפֶשׁ that is, breath, returned upon his inward parts, and he lived (Robinson 1921:80). Brotzman (1987:148) connects these two verses and concludes that 'death is described as the "going out of the breath" while the restoration of life is described as "the returning of the breath"'. The idea is unambiguously that of 'the breath as animating the physical organs of the body' (Robinson 1921:80). Conversely, its departure brings death (Warne 1995:63).

The connection between נֶפֶשׁ and breath is also found in Genesis 2:7, where the Lord breathed (נפח) into Adam's nostrils the breath (נְשָׁמָה) of life;[16] and he became a living person/being (נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה)

14 The verb נפשׁ is probably a denominative from the substantive (Brown, Driver and Briggs 2000:661; Waltke 1999:588; Westermann 1997:743). It appears only three times in the OT (Exod 23:12; 31:17; 2 Sam 16:14), 'significantly always in the reflexive *niphal* with the secondary meaning of "rest, relaxation"' (Gottlieb 1976:71). HALOT (Koehler, Baumgartner and Stamm 1994-2000:711) has 'to breathe freely, to recover'.

15 Some maintain that the concrete meanings of נֶפֶשׁ related to 'breath' includes 'throat' or 'neck' (or even 'gullet') (Bruckner 2005:10; Waltke 1999:588; Seebass 1998, 9:504; Westermann 1997:744; Warne 1995:62, 72; Brotzman 1988:405; 1987, Ch. 9; Peacock 1976:216-217; Wolff 1974:11-15; Johnson 1964:4; etc.). However, Smith (1951:8 n. 1) argues, these renderings are based on 'rather remote Semitic languages' (an etymological fallacy as noted above) and demonstrate unnatural translations of נֶפֶשׁ in Isa 5:14; Jonah 2:5-7; Ps 69:1; etc. In these texts, as elsewhere, the LXX takes ψυχή; it never translates נֶפֶשׁ as 'neck' or 'throat' (ibid.). For more discussions on the objection of the translations of נֶפֶשׁ as 'neck' or 'throat', see Gottlieb 1976:73; Jacob 1974, 9:618; Seligson 1951:58ff; etc.

16 Based on Job 27:3; 33:4, Laurin (1961:132) asserts that the breath (נְשָׁמָה) of life here is identical to God's spirit (רוּחַ). For further discussions, see footnote 14.

17 Hamilton (1990:158-159) states that both נְשָׁמָה (25 times in the OT) and רוּחַ (ca. 400 times in the OT) mean 'breath'. The former is applied only to God and to humanity; the latter is applied to God, humanity, animals, and even false gods. The reason why Gen 2:7 uses the less popular נְשָׁמָה for breath is because 'it is man, and man alone, who is the recipient of the divine breath' (ibid.). (On the contrary, there are scholars who note that נְשָׁמָה can be ascribed to animals too, such as Seligson 1951:73, Stacey 1956:90).

18 Porter (1908:252) maintains that the divine breath is 'individualised… when the time comes for [a person] to be raised from the dead, God will give back the same נְשָׁמָה to the same body', and 'the same person will live again'.

19 Delimited by its connection with a body, נֶפֶשׁ is 'never used of a disembodied spirit or being after death; the inhabitants of Sheol are never called "souls"' (Laurin 1961:132).

20 נֶפֶשׁ as person 'gives the term priority in the anthropological vocabulary, for the same cannot be said of either spirit, heart, or flesh' (Jacob 1974, 9:620).

(Waltke 1999:588). The association of נְשָׁמָה[17] with נֶפֶשׁ here demonstrates the human being's distinctive status. Humanity is 'unique and superior to the animal creation in that his existence is the result of a divine animation' (Warne 1995:65). On the contrary, the withdrawal of נְשָׁמָה causes death. At death, the human being taken out of the earth goes back to earth again (Gen 3:19), but the divine breath that animates and preserves a person's body during his/her earthly life 'returns to the heavenly regions' (Porter 1908:212, 251).[18] Indeed, everything related to humanity is 'earthly and material', even if it is created by God himself. And the reality is that humanity's existence as a living person is due to God's 'infusion of the breath of life' (Wolff 1974:60).

The comparison of נֶפֶשׁ and נְשָׁמָה warrants further investigation here. One might say that נֶפֶשׁ is employed 'to define the animation of the human as a living person' as explored below; while נְשָׁמָה is employed 'to define more precisely a human person's dependency upon God for his or her life' (Warne 1995:64; see also Stacey 1956:90). Jacob (1974, 9:618) observes that נֶפֶשׁ always includes נְשָׁמָה but is not limited to it. Finally, a human being does not have נֶפֶשׁ, he is נֶפֶשׁ (Wolff 1974:10); whereas, a human being is not נְשָׁמָה, but has it (Smith 1951:6).

Put simply, 'breath' is the basic, concrete meaning of נֶפֶשׁ in the OT.

4.3 נֶפֶשׁ as living creature, person

Given the fact that the cessation of breathing means the end of life (Jacob 1974, 9:618), נֶפֶשׁ, then, does not designate 'an immaterial principle within the human person, which could have its own independent existence apart from the person' (Warne 1995:62). Rather, נֶפֶשׁ is 'an integral part of the human organism, and [is] perceived as inseparable from the concretely existing human person' (ibid.:62–63).[19] Interpreted in these terms, נֶפֶשׁ can be related to 'living creature, person'[20] (Seebass 1998, 9:515) that lives by breathing (Parkhurst 1778:408).

The *locus classicus* of this use of נֶפֶשׁ is probably Genesis 2:7, where the combination of the material (the dust of the ground) and the immaterial (the נְשָׁמָה 'breath' of life from God) makes the man become a living נֶפֶשׁ. That means, 'man is, in his essential nature, a נֶפֶשׁ, a person, an individual' (Brotzman 1987:27). This gender-inclusive usage is very suitable for legal texts and lists of persons (Seebass 1998, 9:515). Two examples of the former (legal texts) are Leviticus 17:10, where 'Every man...who eats any blood...I will set my face against the נֶפֶשׁ [person] that eats blood', and Leviticus

23:30, where 'Every נֶפֶשׁ [person] who does any work on this same day, that נֶפֶשׁ [person] I will destroy from among his people' (Wolff 1974:21). Examples of the latter (lists of persons) include Exodus 12:4: 'according to the number of נְפָשֹׁת [persons]' and Jeremiah 52:29: 'in the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar, 832 נֶפֶשׁ [people] from Jerusalem' (Westermann 1997:755).

The preceding examples demonstrate that נֶפֶשׁ can be used to designate a single person (Lev 17:10; 23:30), a plural (Exod 12:4),[21] or 'a collective expression for a whole group of individuals' (Jer 52:29; Wolff 1974:21). One more instance of the collective use of נֶפֶשׁ is found in Genesis 12:5, where the people Abram took with him to Canaan are called [הַנֶּפֶשׁ]. Wolff observes (ibid.): 'This collective use of נֶפֶשׁ is shown very clearly where numbers are mentioned: the offspring of Leah number 33 נֶפֶשׁ (Gen 46:15), of Zilpah 16 נֶפֶשׁ (v.18), of Rachel 14 נֶפֶשׁ (v. 22) and of Bilhah 7 נֶפֶשׁ (v.25); all the offspring of Jacob who came to Egypt were 66 (v. 26) or 70 נֶפֶשׁ (v. 27).'

In a word, נֶפֶשׁ, along with its meaning 'breath', means 'living creature, person' and can be used as singular, plural, or collective.

4.4 נֶפֶשׁ as vital self

After interpreting נֶפֶשׁ as 'living creature, person', it is obviously easy for the emphasis to shift to more abstract concepts such as 'vital self' (Seebass 1998, 9:510; Von Rad 2001, 1:153) in this section and 'life' in the following section. Seebass (1998, 9:512; Westermann 1997:752) points out that a crucial distinction between נֶפֶשׁ as vital self and נֶפֶשׁ as life resides in the fact that נֶפֶשׁ is usually the subject in the former, while it usually is the object in the latter.

Seebass (ibid.:510) maintains that many texts show that 'humans have a relationship with themselves as individuals; this is unmistakably the case when נֶפֶשׁ denotes the vital self'. Seebass's argument refers to the pronominal use of נֶפֶשׁ, which is found in both prose and poetry. The regular pronominal use of נֶפֶשׁ in prose is found in Genesis 12:13, where Abram says to Sarai: 'Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you and my נֶפֶשׁ [i.e. I] may live on account of you' (Brotzman 1988:403). In poetry, נֶפֶשׁ with a personal suffix (e.g. 'my נֶפֶשׁ' or 'your נֶפֶשׁ') is usually employed to parallel a simple pronoun (ibid.), or that involved in the inflection of the verb, and so on. (Johnson 1964:16). For example, Job 30:25 reads:

21 נֶפֶשׁ in its plural form only occurs 52 times in the OT. Ezek 13:18-20 comprises a number of the plural forms of נֶפֶשׁ, and in some cases the notion clearly expressed is 'persons' or 'individuals' (Brotzman 1988:402).

Have I not wept for him who was having a hard time?

Did not my נֶפֶשׁ [I myself] grieve for the poor? (ibid.)

Johnson (1964:18; cf. Brotzman 1988:403) calls this a '*pathetic* periphrasis' (italics added), asserting that 'the use of this term as a substitute for the personal pronoun often betrays a certain intensity of feelings' (ibid.). Johnson (ibid.) further notes in regard to Isaac's blessing of his son in Genesis 27:4, 19, 25, 31: 'Thus, when [נֶפֶשׁ] is used of the subject of the action in bestowing a blessing, it appears to spring from and certainly serves to accentuate the view that the speaker needs to put all his being into what he says, if he is to make his words effective.'

Samson's sacrificing himself to destroy his enemies is another example (ibid.).

The rendering of the English Version (i.e. 'Let me [נַפְשִׁי] die with the Philistines' [Judg 16:30]) is far from doing justice to the emotional content of the original, and one is forced to admit that the Hebrew really defies anything like a satisfactory translation.

Following Johnson's accent on the intensity of feelings, Goldingay (2007:257) interprets נֶפֶשׁ along with a personal suffix 'as a whole being, and specifically a being with longings'. Thus, Psalm 63:1 may be rendered as 'God, you are my God, I search for you; *my whole being* [נַפְשִׁי] thirsts for you'; verse 5 as 'As with a rich feast *my whole person* [נַפְשִׁי] is full...'; verse 8 as '*My whole person* [נַפְשִׁי] has stuck to you; your right hand has upheld me' (ibid.:254; emphases added). Again, the intensity of feelings and emotions can be grasped in the texts where the נֶפֶשׁ is the precise subject of the psalms of lamentation; it is frightened (6:3), it despairs and is disquieted (42:5f., 11; 43:5), it feels itself weak and despondent (Jonah 2:7), it is exhausted and feels defenseless (Jer 4:31), it is afflicted (Ps 31:7; cf. Gen 42:21) and suffers misery (Isa 53:11). The נֶפֶשׁ is often described as being bitter (מַר), that is to say embittered through childlessness (1 Sam 1:10), troubled because of illness (2 Kgs 4:27), enraged because it has been injured (Judg 18:25; 2 Sam 17:8) (Wolff 1974:17).

Moreover, נֶפֶשׁ rejoices (Isa 61:10) and loves (Song 1:7) (Briggs 1897:27). For Seebass (1998, 9:511), נֶפֶשׁ as vital self 'makes expressions denoting repulsion appear even more vivid'. For instance, it abhors (Lev 26:11), detests (Num 21:5), and loathes (Job 10:1).

As to the reflexive pronominal use[22] of נֶפֶשׁ, an interesting example is seen in Leviticus 11:43–44, which 'deals with ritual uncleanness,

22 Biblical scholars do not reach a consensus in terms of the pronominal use of נֶפֶשׁ. For Briggs (1897:21-22), there are 53 texts where נֶפֶשׁ is used as a reflexive pronoun and 70 texts where נֶפֶשׁ is used as a personal pronoun, i.e. 123 in all. Becker (1942:117 in Johnson 1964:15 n.3) locates a total of 135. While Robinson (1926:16) points out that there are 223 in total. Johnson (1964:15 n. 3) comments that there exist difficulties in making a precise analysis on this issue.

and this uncleanness is expressed in terms of reflexive action' (Brotzman 1988:403). In Hebrew, reflexive action is expressed either with Hithpael stems (וְלֹא תִטַּמְּאוּ בָּהֶם 'Do not make yourselves unclean by means of them' (v. 43) and הִתְקַדִּשְׁתֶּם 'consecrate yourselves' (v. 44)) or with Piel stems plus 'your נֶפֶשׁ (plural)' (אַל־תְּשַׁקְּצוּ אֶת־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם 'Do not defile yourselves' (v. 43) and וְלֹא תְטַמְּאוּ אֶת־נַפְשֹׁתֵיכֶם 'Do not make yourselves unclean' (v. 44)) (cf. Runge, Westbury, and Lyle 2014, Lev 11:43–44; Brotzman 1988:403).

Briefly, the pronominal use of נֶפֶשׁ both in prose and poetry manifests נֶפֶשׁ as vital self. Indeed, a person does not *have* a vital self but *is* a vital self (cf. Köhler 1957:142).

This study will now turn to a discussion of נֶפֶשׁ denoting God's vital self.

As has been seen, over 700 out of 745 appearances of נֶפֶשׁ in the OT are related to humanity, that 'aspires to life and is therefore living (which also makes [humans] comparable with the animal)' (Wolff 1974:25). It is rarely used to refer to God. This is because God does not have the bodily, physical appetites and cravings common to humans,[23] nor is his life restricted by death (Waltke 1999:591; see also Marter 1964:104). Thus, one can find that substantial strata of the OT avoid referring to the נֶפֶשׁ of God, such as 'the older strata of the Pentateuch, up to and including Deuteronomy' (Wolff 1974:25). Merely 21 occurrences can be seen in later language, mainly prophetic and poetic (ibid.:25, 232, n. II.6).

In some passages, נֶפֶשׁ is used of God in conveying 'forcefully his passionate disinclination or inclination toward someone' (Waltke 1999:591). More frequently, God's נֶפֶשׁ is employed as the subject of the act to depict God's aversion to his disobedient people with intensity and passion (Westermann 1997:756; cf. Harvey 1973:171). For example, Jeremiah 6:8 reads, 'be warned, O Jerusalem, lest my [נֶפֶשׁ] be estranged from you'; Jeremiah 5:9, 29; 9:8 report, 'should my [נֶפֶשׁ] not take vengeance on such a people?' (Westermann 1997:756). But as for a positive reading, Westermann (ibid.:757) notes that 'the positive counterpart occurs only rarely with נֶפֶשׁ as the subject'. For example, Isaiah 42:1 reads 'in whom my [נֶפֶשׁ] is well pleased'. Jeremiah 12:7 has 'I will give the one I [נַפְשִׁי] love into the hands of her enemies' (Wolff 1974:25). In other cases, נֶפֶשׁ is used as God's unfettered desire in Job 23:13, or appears merely as a reflexive pronoun, such as Amos 6:8; Jeremiah 51:14, where God swears by himself (ibid.; Seebass1998, 9:516).

23 Marter (1964:104) writes, the reason why physical appetites were never attributed to God is because 'the pagan neighbors of Israel consistently attributed the grossest bodily appetites to their gods'.

In conclusion, Marter (1964:101) notes that '[d]oubtless these passages may be considered as examples of anthropomorphism, but if so they emphatically illustrate that in the Hebrew mind the identification of נֶפֶשׁ with the human individual was so complete that the Hebrews could even attribute [נֶפֶשׁ] to God as an individual'.

4.5 נֶפֶשׁ as life

In more than 200 instances the word נֶפֶשׁ means 'life' (Brotzman 1987:45). Seebass (1998, 9:512) points out that 'the word denotes not life in general but life instantiated in individuals, animal or human'. These uses can be relegated into two categories: נֶפֶשׁ as individual life (ibid.) and נֶפֶשׁ related to blood (Brotzman 1987:45).

4.5.1 נֶפֶשׁ as individual life

Due to the many appearances of נֶפֶשׁ in this sub-category, grouping its main uses according to certain common features is helpful in understanding its meaning as 'life'. In such usage, נֶפֶשׁ is usually the object in sentences as noted earlier. First of all, נֶפֶשׁ is related to 'threats to life' (Seebass 1998, 9:513; Westermann 1997:753; Brotzman 1987:45). The first instance is the use of נֶפֶשׁ 'life' as the direct object of בקש 'seek', i.e. 'to seek the life of someone' (ibid.). One of the 18 texts (Logos bible software, word study נֶפֶשׁ) that represent this usage is Exodus 4:19, where 'the LORD said to Moses in Midian, "Go back to Egypt, for all the men who were seeking your life are dead" (NASB1995). Another example is the use of נֶפֶשׁ as the object of לקח 'take'. Ezekiel 33:6 reads that the sword comes and takes life from them, i.e. the sword kills them (Brotzman 1987:48); both Elijah (1 Kgs 19:4) and Jonah (Jonah 4:3) request the Lord to take their life from them (ibid.).

Secondly, נֶפֶשׁ as life occurs in the *talion* formula of 'נֶפֶשׁ for נֶפֶשׁ' (Waltke 1999:590; Seebass 1998, 9:513; Westermann 1997:753; Brotzman 1987:48–49). The earliest version of this use is probably Exodus 21:23 (Stuart 2006, 2:492; Seebass 1998, 9:513), 'But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life [נֶפֶשׁ for נֶפֶשׁ]'. Though ransom is permitted in cases of accidental killing of the נֶפֶשׁ, it is unambiguously prohibited in cases of murder (Num 35:31; Seebass 1998, 9:513). In Deuteronomy 19:21, the principle of 'נֶפֶשׁ for נֶפֶשׁ' applies in cases of false witness as well. Moreover, 1 Kings 19:2 'has Jezebel say that she will make Elijah's life like that of one of the prophets of Baal: life for life' (ibid.). The collocation 'נֶפֶשׁ for נֶפֶשׁ' is even employed in the OT once to refer to the life of animals:

'Anyone who takes the life of someone's animal must make restitution—life for life' (Lev 24:18; Brotzman 1987:50).

Thirdly, נֶפֶשׁ is related to risks 'in battle or in other, more general, circumstances' (ibid.:61). An instance of this usage is found in 2 Samuel 23:17 (see also 1 Chr 11:19), where David was unwilling to drink water brought by his followers at the risk of their lives (Seebass 1998, 9:512). Similarly, Judges 9:17 reports that Gideon cast his נֶפֶשׁ in the battle, i.e. he 'exposed his life to the danger of fighting for the sake of Israel' (Brotzman 1987:61–62). Even more drastic is the very archaic, poetic composition in Judges 5:18, where Zebulun and Naphtali had fought valiantly and well; the former is especially depicted as a people who risked their lives (נֶפֶשׁ) to the point of death (ibid.:61; Seebass 1998, 9:512).

Fourthly, many passages with נֶפֶשׁ have to do with 'the deliverance of life' (Westermann 1997:752; see also Waltke 1999:590; Seebass 1998, 9:512). Almost all the verbs within this semantic domain have נֶפֶשׁ as object. For example, with נצל, 'and deliver our lives from death' (Josh 2:13; Isa 44:20); with מלט, 'if you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be put to death' (1 Sam 19:11); with חלץ, 'rescue my life' (Ps 6:5); with ישע, 'he will save the lives of the needy' (Ps 72:13; Waltke 1999:590). Finally, In Psalm 49:15, the poet is confident that God will פדה 'redeem' his life out of the grave (ibid.).

In sum, נֶפֶשׁ as 'life' refers not to life in general, but to life in individuals, with seemingly more emphasis on physical life.

4.5.2 נֶפֶשׁ related to blood

Genesis 9:4, Leviticus 17:11, 14 and Deuteronomy 12:23 are ritual texts which 'most clearly illustrate the connection between נֶפֶשׁ and blood' (Jacob 1974, 9:619). In these texts נֶפֶשׁ 'has nothing whatever to do with a breath-soul or a blood-soul;[24] it simply denotes the vital force' (ibid.). Just as Seligson (1951:28) notes, it is a common conception that humanity 'at an early stage of culture identified blood with the vital force', as represented in the OT. In the same vein, Johnson (1964:22) views vitality as the defining characteristic of נֶפֶשׁ.

Pedersen (1926, 1:171–176) goes further to suggest that in the OT each body part, including blood, represents a 'principal denomination' of the vital life, or נֶפֶשׁ, which manifests itself in and through various body organs. For Laurin (1961:132), this is 'simply the principle of synecdoche',[25] given that נֶפֶשׁ is the individual in his/her totality. Thus, the OT does not understand נֶפֶשׁ as being

24 The נֶפֶשׁ as not a breath-soul or a blood-soul means that it is not perceived as a 'separate, distinct "part" of the person' (Warne 1995:69).

25 cf. Johnson 1964:37, 69.

equated with the blood, but perceives the vital life-force as being manifested through various physical parts, such as blood in this case (Warne 1995:69–70).

Finally, Jacob's observation (1974, 9:619) on the relation between נֶפֶשׁ, blood and breath is worth noting: 'The relation between נֶפֶשׁ and blood is probably along other lines which are independent of the relation between נֶפֶשׁ and breath. Basic to both, however, is the idea of the body as a living organism. When breath and blood leave the body, then every form of life disappears.'

4.6 נֶפֶשׁ as desire, appetite

The meaning of נֶפֶשׁ can readily be figuratively extended from the life principle to refer to one's desire or appetite. The physical desire ranges 'from the sexual drive of a wild donkey in heat (Jer 2:24), to the physical appetite (Prov 23:2; Eccl 6:7)' (Fredericks 1997, 3:133). Thus Jeremiah 2:24 reports, 'a wild donkey accustomed to the desert, sniffing the wind in her craving [בְּאַוַּת נַפְשׁוֹ][26] —in her heat who can restrain her'?

In other cases, נֶפֶשׁ signifies the desire for food: 'you may eat grapes according to your appetite [נֶפֶשׁ], until you are satisfied' (Deut 23:24; cf. Psalm 78:18; Waltke 1999:588). Isaiah 56:11 reads, 'They are dogs with mighty appetites [נֶפֶשׁ]; they never have enough' (Brown et al. 2000:660). Proverbs 12:10 states that a righteous man is one who knows the נֶפֶשׁ of his beast, i.e. he is 'a person who provides for his animal's need for food and drink' (Brotzman 1988:401).

4.7 נֶפֶשׁ as corpse, body

As has been discussed earlier, נֶפֶשׁ refers to vitality. Thus, נֶפֶשׁ as a deceased or a corpse, for Westermann (1997:756), is difficult to explain. He argues: 'The usage probably derives from the general meaning 'person'; one could regard this designation as a euphemism[27] designed to avoid direct reference to the corpse (ibid.).'

However, for Wolff (1974:22), the shift of meaning of נֶפֶשׁ from vitality to corpse is understandable. He argues: 'The semantic element 'vitality', which also applies to the animal, has largely contributed to the fact that נֶפֶשׁ can be a term for the person and the enumerable individuals, from which, in extreme cases, the meaning 'corpse' follows (ibid.:25).'

Commenting on Ezekiel 13:19, Wolff (ibid.:22) further notes that 'Ez. 13:19 distinguishes נְפָשׁוֹת who ought not to die from those who

26 Johnson (1964:13) asserts that the frequent association of נֶפֶשׁ with אַוָּה can express 'a wide range of activity from the simple desire for food...to the worshipper's longing for fellowship with God'.

27 For Westermann (1997:756; cf. Seligson 1951:78ff.), semantic polarization (a feature of the Semitic languages) proposed by Johnson (1964:22) is not a satisfactory explanation for the usage of נֶפֶשׁ as corpse.

ought not to live...This statement suggests a detachment of the concept נֶפֶשׁ from the concept of life; stress lies on the individual being as such. This makes the extreme possibility of speaking of a נֶפֶשׁ מֵת (Num 6:6) comprehensible'.

The use of נֶפֶשׁ to denote a corpse only appears in 12 texts[28] in the OT, and is confined to the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Haggai (Brotzman 1987:131). These texts are related to 'a series of legal ordinances concerned with pollution through contact with a corpse' (Westermann 1997:756). For example, according to Numbers 6:6, the Nazirite must not go near 'a person who has died—a dead individual, a corpse' (Wolff 1974:22). Here the author of Numbers 'is not thinking of a 'dead soul', or of a 'slain life', but simply of...a corpse' (ibid.), a dead body (נֶפֶשׁ מֵת) (NIV2011; ESV). In the combination of נֶפֶשׁ מֵת, נֶפֶשׁ is understood as 'body'. Wolff (ibid.) goes further to accentuate that even without the addition of מֵת, נֶפֶשׁ can still mean the corpse of a human individual in certain cases, such as Numbers 5:2; 6:11.

4.8 Conclusion

The investigation in this section has shown that נֶפֶשׁ can have the following possible meanings: (1) breath, (2) living creature, person, (3) vital self (pronominal use, the whole being/person), (4) life, (5) desire, appetite, (6) corpse, body.

It has also shown that the meanings of נֶפֶשׁ in the OT are more related to the physical aspects of human beings (Waltke 1999:591).[29]

5. נֶפֶשׁ and its Greek equivalent ψυχή in the LXX and the NT

5.1 Introduction

Among the anthropological terms, ψυχή has been the centre of controversies since the beginning of the early church (Jewett 1971:334). To make things worse, OT scholars with great unanimity view the rendering of נֶפֶשׁ with ψυχή as 'insufficient or even misleading' because of its introducing the 'Greek doctrine of the soul' or Greek spiritualism or dualism (Westermann 1997:759). However, Bratsiotis (ibid.) maintains that there is 'an astonishing correspondence' between the Hebrew word נֶפֶשׁ and the Greek word ψυχή if one can commence with the pre-Platonic usage of ψυχή.[30] If this is the case, the semantic range and usage of נֶפֶשׁ in the OT could be further illuminated by its Greek equivalent ψυχή. In what

28 The occurrences are as follows: נֶפֶשׁ or נֶפֶשׁ אָדָם: Lev 19:28; 21:1; 22:4; Num 5:2; 6:11; 9:6,7,10; 19:13; Hag 2:13; נֶפֶשׁ מֵת: Lev 21:11; Num 6:6 (Brotzman 1987, Ch. 8).

29 This is not to say that 'the OT presents man as physical only' (Waltke 1999:591). There are other OT ideas conveying the psychological dimension of humans, such as 'the "spirit" of man', 'the heart [לֵבָב] of man', humans in the image of God, and a human's relation to God (ibid.).

30 Bratsiotis (cited in Westermann 1997:759) suggests, 'breath' is the basic meaning of ψυχή, which also means: life, person, the seat of desire and emotions, the centre of religious expression, etc.

follows the researcher examines the use of ψυχή in the LXX and the NT respectively.

5.2 The use of ψυχή in the LXX

According to Lys (1966:186–187), out of 754 occurrences with נֶפֶשׁ in the OT, 680 are rendered as ψυχή in the LXX. Though the stereotyped rendering of נֶפֶשׁ in the LXX fails to provide a significant clue for the understanding of this term, Lys finds that the more frequent use of the plural in the LXX denotes the tendency to individualise, that can be observed elsewhere in the LXX. He writes:

> It is clear from this that the LXX has a tendency to consider the 'soul [נֶפֶשׁ]' in a more individualistic way than does the Hebrew text; the latter was still under the influence of the collective soul; the LXX is more respectful of the reality of each being as an individual person to be distinguished from another (ibid.:188).

For Lys (ibid.:194–202), more crucial clues for understanding the various senses of נֶפֶשׁ can be found through the investigation of its translations with something other than ψυχή. He observes the LXX does not utilise any other word with such regularity. The divergent Greek renderings of נֶפֶשׁ, when explained in terms of the context, remain within the range of senses that נֶפֶשׁ has in the OT, with 'person' and a pronoun ('self') outnumbering all the other renderings.

It is also important to note that the LXX uses ψυχή 62 times for words other than נֶפֶשׁ, such as for בֶּטֶן 'belly' (ibid.:207–216). For Lys (ibid.:216), this interesting phenomenon shows that 'the LXX… did not understand ψυχή in a Platonic way at all'.

Commenting on the preceding investigations, Lys (ibid.:227) writes: '[I]t is obvious that where the LXX avoids translating נֶפֶשׁ by ψυχή, it is not in order to reserve ψυχή for a dualistic meaning, since elsewhere ψυχή follows the various Hebrew meanings of נֶפֶשׁ (even when נֶפֶשׁ is absent). The LXX never goes in the direction in which 'soul' would be understood as opposite to 'body' (as in Platonic dualism).'

In sum, the LXX employs ψυχή in much the same way as the Hebrew uses נֶפֶשׁ. The Greek rendering of the Hebrew term appears to 'carefully avoid dualism and is an excellent, faithful understanding and interpretation of נֶפֶשׁ' (ibid.:228).

5.3 The use of ψυχή in the NT

In investigating ψυχή in the NT, the first fact to notice is the surprising infrequency of this term, especially when compared to other anthropological terms in the NT. For example, in the MT, נֶפֶשׁ (754 times) is roughly twice as common as רוּחַ, but in Paul the corresponding word ψυχή appears merely 13 times, while πνεῦμα appears 146 times (Stacey 1955:274). Despite his rare use of ψυχή, Paul's anthropology has been misunderstood as dichotomy (body and soul) or trichotomy (body, soul and spirit), which has prevailed in Christian traditional interpretation. However, new criteria for evaluating Paul proposed by Lüdermann in the late 19th century became determinative for doing justice to Pauline anthropology (Warne 1995:157). For example, Lüdermann (in Jewett 1971:336) interprets ψυχή as that which 'enlivens the outer person', and which is 'intimately connected' with the physical dimension of human. He further states: 'The word ψυχή always appears…in a connexion which shows the human being in a situation of inferiority, and is not to be brought into agreement with the all-embracing and loftier idea of ψυχή found elsewhere in the classical and Hellenistic usage' (Lüdermann in Stacey 1956:125; 1955:276).[31]

Since Lüdermann, the concept of ψυχή has been understood as similar to the Hebrew term נֶפֶשׁ, and 'an interpretation of Pauline anthropology in Hebraic terms has become much more common' (Warne 1995:157–158).

Then, how is the term ψυχή employed by Paul and other NT authors? To this question the present study now turns. Of the 103 occurrences of ψυχή in the NT, none is found in Galatians, Philemon, 2 Thessalonians, the Pastorals, or 2 John. ψυχή is seen relatively frequently in the Synoptics and Acts (53 times). The statistics prove 'no particular preference by any one NT author' (Sand 1990, 3:501).

A quick review of the usage of ψυχή in the NT is conducted according to the following groupings: (1) Paul and the deutero-Pauline writings,[32] (2) the Synoptics and Acts, (3) the Johannine corpus, and (4) other writings (ibid.:500).

5.3.1 ψυχή in Paul and the deutero-Pauline writings

ψυχή in Paul and the deutero-Pauline writings is used rarely (13 times) in comparison with the OT as noted above. In the few texts where it occurs, Paul follows 'the Hebraic conception of man[33] as an intrinsic unity, with a diversity of aspects' (Stacey 1955:276).

31 In the same vein, Hicks (2003:107) asserts that 'what is definitely lacking in the New Testament is any concept of the soul as something to be set over against the body, something superior to it and longing to be free of it, and something that can exist independently of it. Though these concepts would have been well known in New Testament times and were appearing in contemporary Jewish writings including Philo, the New Testament writers clearly rejected them'.

32 The reason for reviewing this grouping first is that Paul's anthropology has been misunderstood as dichotomy (body and soul) or trichotomy (body, soul and spirit).

33 Jewett (1971:449; see also Zerbe 2008:173) points out that there are two instances within the Pauline corpus 'where the basic Judaic uniformity in the use of ψυχή is temporarily broken', for example, Paul's reformulating the ψυχικός-πνευματικός distinction in 1 Cor 15:44, 46 in order to repair the damage caused by Gnosticism (Reis 2009:590-591). Heckel (2006:125) argues that Paul is not teaching a body-soul dualism, but a

transformation of the body similar to that of the resurrected Christ. That is, at the final judgment, Christians will receive a 'spiritual body'. Worth noting is that 'as soon as [Paul] has made use of the term as a weapon against its originators, he drops it entirely. ψυχικός never appears again in the Pauline epistles, and its dualistic implications have no influence whatever upon the subsequent use of ψυχή' (Jewett 1971:449).

34 Rom 11:3; 16:4; Phil 2:30; 1 Cor 15:45; 2 Cor 12:15; 1 Thess 2:8.

35 Rom 2:9; 13:1; 2 Cor 1:23.

36 Eph 6:6; Phil 1:27; Col 3:23; 1 Thess 5:23.

37 The trio πνεῦμα—ψυχή—σῶμα used here is simply, but significantly in pragmatic terms, a rhetorical flourish at the conclusion of the epistle.

38 For example, Matt 2:20; 6:25; Mark 3:4; 10:45; Luke 12:20; 14:26; Acts 15:26; 20:24.

39 For example, Matt 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35-36; Luke 9:24; 17:33.

40 For example, Matt 11:29.

41 For example, Matt 12:18; 26:28; Mark 14:34; Luke 2:35.

He also perceives ψυχή as 'the vitality or life-force that makes a living being, or a being living' (Zerbe 2008:172; see also Bultmann 2007:204; Harvey 1973:169). Thus, ψυχή in Paul means 'whole natural life of the person',[34] 'the individual person as subject',[35] the seat of feelings, thought and will[36] (Warne 1995:158–202; see also Stacy 1956: 122–123).

1 Thessalonians 5:23 has been used to support the trichotomous view of the human person and needs further investigation. In Christian tradition, Paul's trio πνεῦμα—ψυχή—σῶμα has been understood as the formulation of anthropological trichotomy (Sand 1990, 3:502). Nonetheless, the threefold connection of spirit, soul and body is 'confined to this text alone in Paul and, therefore, cannot provide an adequate basis for a conclusive statement concerning Pauline anthropology' (Warne 1995:199). Furthermore, it is the terms ὁλοτελής and ὁλόκληρος that point to the real meaning, instead of the trio πνεῦμα—ψυχή—σῶμα (Stacey 1956:123; see also Green 2009, 5:359). Stacey (ibid.) argues that Paul is accentuating the whole person to be preserved to the Parousia. Bultmann (2007:205) also suggests that this text 'evidently means only that the readers may be kept sound, each in his entirety'. Similarly, Jewett (1971:347) states that Paul's insistence in the benediction is to manifest that 'God works to sanctify the whole [person]'.[37] Sand (1990, 3:502) further notes that 'if one considers the apostle's other anthropological statements, one sees that the three words are used in 1 Thess 5:23 against adversaries who incorrectly see and evaluate human beings dualistically.'

Finally, Robinson (1926:108) contends: the triad of πνεῦμα, ψυχή and σῶμα is far from a systematic dissection of the different constituents of humanity; 'its true analogy is such an Old Testament sentence as Deuteronomy 6:5, where a somewhat similar enumeration emphasises the totality of the personality'.

Accordingly, ψυχή in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 is better understood as the seat of feelings, thought and will, as suggested by Warne (1995:199).

5.3.2 ψυχή in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts

In the Synoptic Gospels and Acts, ψυχή (53 occurrences) means earthly, natural physical life,[38] true life (in distinction from purely physical life),[39] the whole being,[40] the seat of emotions and feelings,[41] and human vitality in the widest sense (cf. Sand 1990,

3:502; Schweizer 1974, 9:637–647). In this grouping, one problem passage needs to be discussed briefly here:

Matthew 10:28 juxtaposes God, who can destroy both σῶμα and ψυχή, and humans, who can destroy the σῶμα, but not the ψυχή. Jeeves (2006:104) notes that for some, the face value of this pericope could certainly be seen as a proof text to assert the survival of the separate soul at death. As such, the doctrine of the immortal soul seems to be alluded to here. However, 'the reference to God's power to destroy the ψυχή and σῶμα in Hades is opposed to the idea of the immortality of the soul' (Schweizer 1974, 9:646; see also Nolland 2005:436). For Schweizer (ibid.), a human being 'can be thought of only as a whole, both ψυχή and σῶμα'. Associating this text with Mark 8:35, where true life preserved by God is distinguished from purely physical life, Schweizer (ibid.:643, 646) further elucidates that the ψυχή, that is, 'the true life of man as it is lived before God and in fellowship with God', is not influenced by the cessation of physical life. He concludes: 'God alone controls the whole man, ψυχή as well as σῶμα…man can be presented only as corporeal, but what affects the body does not necessarily affect the man himself, for whom a new body has already been prepared by God (ibid.:646).'

The body-soul dualism is rejected by Lucan writings as well. Luke 16:22 and 23:43 denote that after death the human being as a whole will either abide in Hades or in Paradise. The resurrection appearances of the risen Lord are also delineated with great bodily realism in Luke. In Acts 2:31, Luke avoids referring to the ψυχή not being left in Hades as read in Psalm 16:10, but notes that the σὰρξ of Jesus does not see corruption. All these demonstrate that Luke is unambiguously teaching a corporeal resurrection (the continued life of the whole person), rather than the Hellenistic immortality of the soul (ibid.:646–647; see also Sand 1990, 3:502).

5.3.3 ψυχή in the Johannine corpus

ψυχή occurs 20 times in the Johannine corpus. In most appearances (13 times), it means physical life of Jesus,[42] of any other person,[43] or even of creatures in the sea.[44] In other cases, it simply means human being (Rev 18:13), the seat of emotion/thought/will (John 12:27), or appetite/desire (Rev 18:14).

The remaining four occurrences of ψυχή in this grouping are problematic and are therefore briefly explored here. In John 10:24a, the Jews asked Jesus, ἕως πότε τὴν ψυχὴν ἡμῶν αἴρεις, which is rendered as 'How long will you keep us in suspense?' in popular

42 John 10:11, 15, 17; 1 John 3:16a.

43 John 12:25 (two times); 13:37, 38; 15:13; 1 John 3:16b; Rev 12:11. John 12:25 associates ψυχή with ζωή to avoid 'any strict dichotomies between earthly/ heavenly, this life/next life' (Clark-Soles 2006:122).

44 Rev 8:9; 16:3.

English versions (NIV, NASB, ESV, NRSV, etc.). Michaels (2010:596) notes that though this rendering 'makes excellent sense in the context, no such meaning is attested in biblical, classical, or Hellenistic Greek'. He (ibid.; see also Morris 1995:461, n. 71) examines the context and finds a similar construction in verse 18a (οὐδεὶς αἴρει αὐτὴν ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ), where αὐτός is the pronoun for τὴν ψυχήν μου, meaning that 'no one takes it [Jesus' life] from me [Jesus]'. Therefore, the appropriate translation of John 10:24a, for Michaels, seems to be 'How long will you take away our life?' or 'kill us'. He explains:

> It appears that the language of 'killing' or 'taking away life' is used here metaphorically, as in our colloquial English expression, 'the suspense is killing me'…In the wake of the 'split' dividing them (v. 19), they [the Jews] are uncertain what to expect, for they are no longer in control. The notion of 'killing' or a prolonged death, therefore, is by no means inappropriate as a metaphor for their frustration (ibid.).

Michaels's argument seems to be reasonable. ψυχή in John 10:24a means 'life', which is consistent with Johannine usage of ψυχή (13 out of 20 occurrences as 'physical life').

The second problem text is found in 3 John 2, which seems to indicate a distinction between the physical and the spiritual life. Nevertheless, Schweiser (1974, 9:652) suggests that ψυχή is not an antithesis to the bodily dimension here. As noted earlier, ψυχή means the true life before God and in fellowship with God; thus, it might be sound even when one is sick in body. 'The hope is that the two [true life and body] will be in harmony, not that they will be separated from one another' (ibid.:651–652).

The last two difficult passages are Revelation 6:9 and Revelation 20:4. In both cases, ψυχή is translated 'soul' in the majority of English popular versions (NIV, NASB, ESV, NRSV, etc.). Defying the foregoing rendering, Schweizer (ibid.:654) contends that here ψυχή is the person who 'survives death prior to his resurrection', who is conscious and corporeal. However, 'this intermediate state is not a true life; this will come only with the new corporeality at the resurrection' (ibid.).

In Revelation 20:4, ψυχή is the person in 'the final state after the first resurrection' (ibid.). Obviously, here ψυχή is not referring to 'a purely provisional and definitely non-corporeal state' (ibid.). This is substantiated by 'the relation of the word to the relative masculine pronoun, which shows how much it embraces the whole person' (ibid.). Thus, ψυχή is now a word for a person living in

eschatological salvation. Again, ψυχή does not convey 'any clear distinction between a non-corporeal and a corporeal state' (ibid.).

If Schweizer is right, ψυχή in Revelation 6:9 and Revelation 20:4 refers to the 'person' in the intermediate state and in the final state after the first resurrection respectively.

Thus, the meanings of ψυχή (20 times) in the Johannine corpus consist of physical life (14 times), true life (once), human being/person (three times), the seat of emotion/thought/will (once), or appetite/desire (once).

5.3.4 ψυχή in other writings of the NT

This section examines statements using ψυχή in other writings of the NT. ψυχή in Hebrews is largely traditional and refers to the person himself (Sand 3:503),[45] or to the true and authentic life before God (Schweizer 1974, 9:650–651).[46] The problem pericope is Hebrews 4:12, where the word of God can pierce 'as far as the division of soul [ψυχή] and spirit [πνεῦμα], of both joints and marrow' (NASB1995). One may interpret this text as a support for anthropological trichotomy. However, Ellingworth (1993:263) asserts: 'It is probably misconceived to seek precise definition in such a poetic passage. The general meaning is clearly that the active power of God's Word reaches into the inmost recesses of human existence'.

Besides, as noted already, the majority of occurrences of ψυχή in Hebrews denote 'person' or 'life'. Thus, the rendering of it as 'soul' seems to be inappropriate in this text. This is why Cockerill (2012:216) translates it as 'life'. In sum, there is no definite trichotomy in view here (Schweiser 1974, 9:651).

The remaining appearances of ψυχή in James,[47] 1 and 2 Peter,[48] Jude[49] all refer to the whole person, or self.

5.4 Conclusion

After examining the usage of ψυχή in the LXX and the NT, one finds that both utilise ψυχή along with the Hebrew conception of נֶפֶשׁ. The translators of the former interpret נֶפֶשׁ into Greek terms faithfully, and seem to avoid dualism carefully. Surprisingly, compared to the occurrences of the word נֶפֶשׁ in the OT (754 times), NT authors employ ψυχή much less—only 103 times. When ψυχή is used in the NT, its meanings still fall within the semantic range of נֶפֶשׁ of the OT, such as life, which comprises physical life and true life before God and in fellowship with God, individual person, the whole being or self, the seat of emotions, thought and will, appetite/desire, and human vitality in the widest sense.

45 Heb 10:38; 12:3; 13:17.

46 Heb 6:19; 10:39.

47 Jas 1:21; 5:20 denote the salvation of the whole person (Davids 1982:95).

48 The usage of ψυχή as the whole person or the self 'is characteristic of Peter and Luke' (six times in 1 Pet: 1:9,22; 2:11, 25; 3:20; 4:19, and 15 times in Acts , e.g. Acts 2:41, 43) (Davids 1990:60). The two occurrences of ψυχή in 2 Pet 2:8, 14 also mean the person (Schweiser 1974, 9:653).

49 The only appearance of ψυχή in Jude is in v. 15, which refers to every person (NRSV).

6. Conclusion

In the past, etymology has been widely used to propose meanings of נֶפֶשׁ in the OT, such as neck, throat, sustenance, and perfume. However, because of its high occurrences in the OT, etymological studies are not an appropriate approach to define its senses. Thus, examining its meaning and usage in the OT itself is indispensable in defining its semantic range. This was the goal of section 4 in this study and the result demonstrates that the possible meanings of the OT נֶפֶשׁ are (1) breath, (2) living creature, person, (3) vital self (pronominal use, the whole being/person), (4) life, (5) desire, appetite, (6) corpse, body.

Next, this study delved into the usage of ψυχή, the Greek equivalent of נֶפֶשׁ, in the LXX and the NT. The findings derived from such investigations make it obvious that both the LXX and the NT faithfully follow the denotation of נֶפֶשׁ in the OT and cast some insights on its usage. For example, the translators of the LXX never translate ψυχή with 'throat or neck' and avoid bringing about the implication of dualism when interpreting it. Similarly, it was found that the NT writers never use ψυχή[50] to convey the idea of dichotomy or trichotomy. This implies that 'soul' is an inappropriate rendering of ψυχή in the NT. If the meaning of ψυχή in the NT is similar, if not identical, to that of נֶפֶשׁ in the OT, then, the translation of נֶפֶשׁ with 'soul' calls for re-examination.

For further study, the author suggests using the possible meanings of נֶפֶשׁ listed above to re-examine its 754 occurrences in the OT.[51]

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50 One development of the meaning of ψυχή in the NT is worthy of notice. That is, it refers to both physical life and true life before God and in fellowship with God. This is slightly different from the usage of the OT נֶפֶשׁ, which is almost restricted to physical life.

51 The author has re-examined all occurrences of נֶפֶשׁ in the Psalms and found that its appropriate translations fall within the semantic field proposed by the author. For the details of the examination, see the author's original dissertation, 'Translating *Nephesh* in the Psalms Into Chinese: An Exercise in Intergenerational and Literary Bible Translation' (Doctoral dissertation, South African Theological Seminary, 2017), Appendix I.

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