

*“Magis sensum e sensu quam ex verbo verbum”*

(Hier. In Prol.Jud.)

## Jerome's Translation Art in the Vulgate of Tobit

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A Arte da Tradução de Jerônimo na Vulgata de Tobit

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### Resumo

O presente artigo considera a Vulgata de Tobit do ponto de vista do trabalho de São Jerônimo como tradutor da Bíblia. Ainda que a versão Vulgata do livro de Tobit permaneça sob vários aspectos um *crux interpretum*, nela encontramos exemplificados os principais princípios e técnicas usadas por Jerônimo em seus trabalhos de tradução. Na primeira seção considera-se o prefácio de Jerônimo às suas traduções de Tobit e Judith. Intimamente relacionados, estes oferecem importantes informações metodológicas sobre as mesmas. Na seção que segue apresentamos uma visão geral da tradução jeromíniana de Tobit dentro do panorama da variada tradição textual do livro. Para se compreender melhor a peculiar colocação da Vulgata de Tobit nele, faz-se necessário considerar mais de perto os princípios de trabalho de Jerônimo como tradutor, argumento da seguinte seção. A parte final do estudo oferece uma análise sintética de uma das principais amplificações da Vulgata (Tob 2: 12-18), na qual se vê exemplificados os principais princípios-guia de Jerônimo como tradutor, entre outros o de “sentido por sentido mais do que palavra por palavra”. Em termos gerais, o Tobit de Jerônimo também pode ser visto como resultado desses princípios e testemunha o interessante processo de recepção cristã de antigas histórias judaicas na antiguidade tardia.

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**Palavras-chave:** Tobit; tradução; vulgata; apócrifos; deuterocanônicos; Judite; exemplo; exegese teológica.

## Abstract

The present article considers the Vulgate of Tobit from the point of view of Jerome's very work as Bible translator. Although Jerome's version of the book remains regarding several aspects a *crux interpretum*, in it we find exemplified Jerome's main translative principles and technique. In the first section we consider Jerome's prefaces to Tobit and Judith (composed to be read in relationship to one another), as sources of valuable information of his translation principles. The following section offers in overview Jerome's Tobit upon the background of the book's varied textual tradition. To better appreciate its peculiar collocation within it, it is key a closer consideration of Jerome's translative principles, object of the next section. The study's final part offers a synthetic analysis of one of the Vulgate's main amplifications (Tob 2:12-18) which exemplifies Jerome's main translation principles, among others that of "sense for sense more than word for word." In general terms Jerome's Tobit may be seen also as a result of those principles, also witnessing to the Christian reception process of old Jewish stories in late antiquity.

**Key words:** Tobit; Translation; Vulgate; Apocrypha; Deuterocanonical; Judith; example; theological exegesis.

## Introduction

Jerome's *opus magnum* was no doubt his revision/new translation into Latin of (almost) the whole Bible.<sup>1</sup> Commissioned by Pope Damasus I (366-384) as a revision of the variegated Old Latin text form of the Four Gospels in circulation at the time,<sup>2</sup> Jerome's literary enterprise becomes

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1. "Jerome's greatest achievement was his translation of most of Scripture into Latin from the original languages." See Stefan Rebenich, *Jerome*. London – New York: Routledge 2002, p. 101. Jerome himself translated from the Hebrew all the books of the Hebrew Bible. For the New Testament, he revised the *Vetus Latina* version of the Four Gospels from the Greek. The rest of the New Testament appears to be a revision of other hands (contemporary to Jerome but unknown to date). Jerome left in the Vulgate an unrevised Old Latin version of 1 and 2 Maccabees, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch and the Letter of Jeremiah. Of Tobit and Judith, he included a free translation from an Aramaic *Vorlage*, whereas for the additions of Esther he translated from a Septuagint text and for those of Daniel, from the Greek text of Theodotion.

2. Even if perhaps exaggerated Jerome's statement about the number of variants in circulation at his time (...tot enim sunt exemplaria pene quot codices. See *Letter 36*) only of Lk 24,4f circulated ca. twenty-seven different versions of Old Latin texts! See Heinrich Schlange-Schöningen, Hieronymus. Eine historische Biografie, Ed. Darmstadt: Zabern, 2018, p. 220.

finally the *Vulgata Latina* or Latin Vulgate,<sup>3</sup> a “new” Latin version of the whole Bible. From the sixth century onwards, Jerome’s Vulgate becomes gradually accepted as the standard Latin text of the Bible,<sup>4</sup> the liturgical text of the Western Church, gaining renewed vigor with its “officialization” at the Council of Trent.<sup>5</sup> Jerome’s translation of the Old Testament, concluded in late 404 or more probably 405, included also a new Latin translation of the deuterocanonical books of Tobit and Judith, considered by him as Apocryphal. Jerome’s version of those books is a case in point of several related issues concerning the Old Testament’s reception in late antiquity: the very argument of its translation, canon formation, its Christian interpretation. In this study we consider Jerome’s translation of Tobit from the point of view of his work as Bible translator. Although Jerome’s version of the book remains regarding several aspects a *crux interpretum*, in it we find exemplified Jerome’s main translative principles and technique.

## Jerome’s Accounts of His Translations of Tobit and Judith

As it is known, Jerome’s translations and/or revisions of the Bible were preceded by a preface.<sup>6</sup> In longer or shorter form, such literary units are precious sources of historical, autobiographical, methodological information regarding

3. The name “Vulgate” was not officially known until Trent. See A. Allgeier, “Haec vetus et vulgata editio”. Neues Wort – und begriffsgeschichtliche Beiträge zur Bibel auf dem Tridentinum, *Biblica* 29 (1948) 353-390. As it appears, the first to use the appellative *Vulgata* regarding Jerome’s Latin Bible translation was Faber Stapulensis (c.1455-1536). See E. T. Sutcliffe, The Name “Vulgate”, *Biblica* 29 (1948) pp. 345-352. When Jerome uses the term “vulgata” in his works, he refers to the Old Latin versions.

4. See John Norman Davidson Kelly, *Jerome. His Life, Writings, and Controversies*. Ed. London: Duckworth, 1975, p. 162.

5. See *Council of Trent, Session IV* (1546)=DS 784-785. See also Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu*, n.21. Under the Pontificate of John Paul II, however, right in 1979, the Holy See promulgates the *Nova Vulgata* with a second revision being issued in 1986. Such text becomes the standard Latin text of the Catholic Church. The foundational text was that of the critical edition (a revision of Jerome’s Vulgate) commissioned by Pope Pius X in 1907 to the Benedictine order. See in that regard, Kevin J. Zilverberg, *The Neo-Vulgata as Official Liturgical Translation in Verbum Domini: Liturgy and Scripture. Proceedings of the Ninth Fota International Liturgical Conference 2016* (ed. Joseph Briody), Ed. Wells: Smenos 2017, pp. 93-125.

6. I will quote Jerome’s prefaces with page and line numbers according to *Biblia Sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem* (ed. Robert Weber and Roger Gryson), Ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibel Gesellschaft, 2007<sup>5th</sup>.

each of Jerome's works.<sup>7</sup> In his preface to the books of Samuel and Kings,<sup>8</sup> the first books he translated anew from the Hebrew, Jerome enumerates the Old Testament books that in his opinion belonged to the canon (we may remember that the Stridon became loyally attached to the Hebrew canon).<sup>9</sup> In that regard he was categorical: "whatever [book] is beyond these must be relegated among the Apocrypha.<sup>10</sup> (...) Judith and Tobias (...) are not in the canon" (Prol. gal. 356,53-55).<sup>11</sup> Attached to his principle of the hebraica veritas, it would not be surprising that Jerome would not deign himself to touch the "Apocrypha" during his translation work of the Old Testament (KELLY, 1975, p. 284). He had even alerted to the dangers of such literary corpus, as when advising Laeta on the education of young Paula, he stated: "Let her avoid all apocryphal writings (...), and if she is led to read such not by the truth of the doctrines which they contain but out of respect for the miracles contained in them; let her understand (...) that many faulty elements have been introduced into them, and that it requires infinite discretion to look for gold in the midst of dirt" (Letter 107, 12).<sup>12</sup> In his preface to Solomon's books, Jerome recognizes that the Church reads some of the Apocrypha, but adds that they are solely used "for edifying the people, not for the corroboration of ecclesiastical doctrines" (see Prol. in Lib. Salomonis

7. For a complete introduction to Jerome's prefaces as a literary genre we suggest the reading of Aline Canellis (ed.), Jerome. Prefaces aux livres de la Bible. Source Chrétiennes 592. Ed. Paris, Du Cerf, 2017, pp. 165-201.

8. The *Prologus Galeatus* or "Helmeted Preface" as Jerome calls it (*Biblia Sacra*, pp. 364-366; the expression is found on p. 365, 52) was the first in order of publication. Dedicated to Paula and Eustochium, it was published about 391.

9. See *Prol. gal.* 364, 23-43; Schlange-Schöningen, Hieronymus, p. 222; see also in that regard Daniel Kerber, The Canon in the Vulgate Translation of the Bible, *The Bible Translator* 67/2 (2016) pp. 168-183.

10. See in that regard Edmon L. Gallagher, The Old Testament "Apocrypha" in Jerome's Canonical Theory, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 20/2 (2012) pp. 213-233. As Kelly noticed, in practice Jerome continued to cite the "Apocrypha" as if they were Scripture. Another reason for his resistance regarding them seems to have been the embarrassment he felt in having to argue with Jews on the basis of books which they rejected or even found frankly ridiculous (like the stories of Susanna or Bel and the Dragon). See KELLY, 1975, p. 161.

11. English translations, except if not stated otherwise, are ours.

12. See *Letter* 107,12 (400-1 CE). The translation is from Philip Schaff – Henry Wallace, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series II, vol. 6. Jerome: Letters and Select Works, Ed. New York NY: Cosimo, 2007, p. 194. The Paula in question here, is Paula the younger or the daughter of Saint Paula of Rome's daughter-in-law Laeta (married with Saint Paula's son Toxotius). Saint Paula, we may remember, was one of the noble women who accompanied Saint Jerome to the Orient.

957, 20-21).<sup>13</sup> Considering the Stridon's views on the "Apocrypha", why then did he translate anew Tobit and Judith?<sup>14</sup>

An answer to that question is found in Jerome's (short) prefaces to those books.<sup>15</sup> Although translated separately, the books' prefaces are neatly connected.<sup>16</sup> For that and other reasons, Jerome's translations of Tobit and Judith might have been close to one another in time (if not immediately consecutive).<sup>17</sup> According to the prefaces, they were commissioned by Jerome's friends and benefactors of long date, the bishops Chromatius of Aquileia and Heliodorus of Altinum.<sup>18</sup> Jerome begins his preface to Tobit expressing marvel for his friends' insistence for a new translation of a book excised by the Hebrews from the catalogue of Scriptures; he translates Tobit to satisfy the desire of his patrons rather than by his own enthusiasm. From the preface we also learn of Jerome's work with stenographers, procedure that turned his intense literary activity faster through dictation, and that he justified elsewhere for the weakness of his eyes and body.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, Jerome's acceptance to translate Tobit (and Judith) seems to have been motivated greatly by his "debt" of gratitude with his friends-patrons (to have secretaries was rather expensive in those times). In that light (and in light also of the many controversies Jerome faced with his works), his resistance-statement can be understood as a "manifesto of coherence" with his views and principles. Jerome then continues recounting that his Tobit translation came into being in the course of a single day, as the result of dictation into Latin of what his bilingual coworker read in Aramaic and expressed out loud to him

13. The translation is from Kelly, 1975, p. 161. Interestingly, in that preface, Jerome also states that the Church read Tobit and Judith but do not receive them as canonical. See *Prol. in Lib. Sal.* 957, 19-20.

14. Old Latin versions of both books were extant and circulating in Jerome's time. See Edmon L. Gallagher, Why did Jerome Translate Tobit and Judith? *Harvard Theological Review*, 108/3 (2015) pp. 357-375.

15. The prefaces are found in the *Biblia Sacra* on p. 676 (to Tobit) and p. 691 (to Judith).

16. As if they were written conjointly, some sentences of Judith's preface are only comprehensible when read in relation to Tobit's.

17. Precise dating is still a matter of discussion, running from 398 to 407. See in that regard, Skemp, *The Vulgate of Tobit*, p. 16.

18. Both bishops died about 407. Their deaths set a *terminus ante quem* for the books' translation.  
19. "(...) In addition to this, on account of the weakness of my eyes and bodily infirmity generally, I do not write with my own hand (...)." See *Comm. on Galatians* III pref. (here quoted from Schaf p. 498); KELLY, 1975, p.141f.

in Hebrew.<sup>20</sup> Not surprising, then, that Jerome's rather exotic translation of Tobit would leave to posterity not few questions. Skemp in his dissertation demonstrated that Jerome's Tobias is certainly also a revision of some Old Latin version(s) of the book.<sup>21</sup>

Judith's preface shares some content with Tobit's (canonical status, patron's insistence for its translation, "Chaldean" Vorlage, similar translation procedure and duration<sup>22</sup>) but also contains substantial differences (as his report of Judith's positive reception in the Church and his appraisal of Judith's example). Particularly interesting for our argument are the methodological principles Jerome mentions to have followed in translating it which presumably were the same for Tobit. Besides saying to have revised the "terrible variety of the so many codices" (Prol. in Iud. p. 691, 7), Jerome states a principle, restated and defended repeatedly elsewhere in his works: "magis sensum e sensu quam ex verbo verbum" ("more sense for sense than word for word"; Prol. in Iud. p. 7-8). Jerome concludes his preface to Judith exhorting "to take the widow Judith, an example of chastity, and with perpetual proclamation acclaim her in triumphal praise", example not only for women but also for men. Underlying such statement is another of Jerome's methodological principles, for both his translations and commentaries: *exemplum*. Bible stories are to be read in close relationship with the lives of the faithful, serving to inspire a living ever more in conformity to the Biblical values.<sup>23</sup>

## The Vulgate Version of the Book of Tobit

In comparison to the other (primary) extant versions of the story (Greek and Old Latin text forms), Jerome's translation of the book of Tobit presents

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20. Jerome indirectly assumes thus his lack of skills in Aramaic (or Chaldean as he states). Such information is taken by some authors to date Tobit's translation. See also Giuseppe Priero, *Tobia. La Sacra Bibbia* Garofalo, Ed. Torino: Marietti, 1963, p. 6.

21. "As a result, the first conclusion is that Vg of Tobit is often more a revision of VL than a translation of a different source." See Skemp, *The Vulgate of Tobit*, p. 455 (the argument continues until p. 457).

22. Regarding Judith, Jerome states to have translated it *unam lucubrationunculam*, "in a nocturnal study." See *Pref. in Iudith* 691, 6.

23. See in that regard Vincent T. M. Skemp, *Learning by Example: Exempla in Jerome's Translations and Revisions of Biblical Books*, *Vigiliae Christianae* vol. 65 (2011) pp. 257-284.

several peculiar features. Tobit story is handed down to us in varied forms in length and content. Basically, two related but not coincident versions occur: a long form of the story, found in the Greek MS of the Sinaiticus plus few others and in the manuscripts of the *Vetus Latina*; a shorter or abridged form, in the two main uncials, *Vaticanus* and *Alexandrinus* plus a significant number of Greek minuscules. There exist also a third Greek tradition, which appears to be roughly a mixture of the main two. Most ancient translations (Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic) transmit a short form of the story. Among Qumran material, fragments of four different Aramaic manuscripts of Tobit and of a Hebrew one, were found. To them, it may also be added the medieval Aramaic and Hebrew versions of Tobit.<sup>24</sup> Surprisingly, the Vulgate of Tobit bears only partial and indirect resemblance to the oldest Semitic material. In such varied textual panorama, where then does the Vulgate of Tobit fit in?

In general terms, the Vulgate of Tobit corresponds more or less to the short textual tradition (it is certainly shorter than the Old Latin) although its relation to the short Greek text remains problematic for various reasons.<sup>25</sup> Jerome's version, finally, constitutes a tradition on its own right.<sup>26</sup> In effect, the Vulgate of Tobit, if we accept at face value Jerome's information about his Aramaic Vorlage mentioned in the preface, would be the result of a (free) recasting in Latin of such Vorlage plus a revision of some Old Latin text(s). Jerome in fact, often retained exact words and phrases from the *Vetus Latina*; but he also paraphrased sentences and clauses. The Vulgate of Tobit also presents some stylistic particularities and some neologisms.<sup>27</sup> Two other unique features of his translation are the

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24. For a more detailed introduction to Tobit's complex textual tradition see Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit* (CEJL; Ed. Berlin – New York: De Gruyter 2003) pp. 3-17 with ample bibliography; Priero, *Tobia*, pp. 2-10. For a more detailed evaluation of the main manuscripts of Tobit see Stuart Weeks – Simon Gathercole – Lawrence Stuckenbruck, *The Book of Tobit. Texts from the principal Ancient and Medieval Traditions. With Synopsis, Concordances, and Annotated Texts in Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, Latin and Syriac. FoSub 3*. Ed. Berlin – New York: De Gruyter, 2004, pp. 1-58.

25. See Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, p. 6.

26. See in that regard, Vincent T. M. Skemp, *Jerome's Tobit: A Reluctant Contribution to the Genre Rewritten Bible*, *Revue Bénédictine* vol. 112/2 (2002) 5-35.

Interestingly, for the Church's issuing of the New Vulgate, the foundational text was not that of the Vulgate, but that of the Old Latin.

27. See Giovanni Maria Driussi, *Il libro di Tobia nella letteratura cristiana antica (I-V secolo)*, Ed. Roma: Nonsolocopie, 2003, p. 127.



spelling of the both father and son's names as Tobias (sometimes turning the text a bit confusing) and the retelling of the story entirely in third person (thus omitting the initial "I" section of the book). In the oral interventions of the various characters, there occur some amplifications with a clear purpose of instruction and clarification to the reader.<sup>28</sup> Since those amplifications are not found in any other of the extant available witnesses, they seem to constitute the feature of Jerome's Tobit that makes it so singular.

## Some Remarks on Jerome's Translation Technique

Jerome's highly qualified preparation as an "academic" is completely out of question. Kelly calls him the Christian Cicero, reporting that, "at the renaissance the elegance of his style, his seemingly encyclopedic learning, and his success at putting classical culture to the service of Christianity, were to captivate humanist scholars" (1975, p. 333). In his *Apology Against Rufinus*, Jerome speaks of himself thus: "Ego philosophus, rhetor, grammaticus, dialecticus, Hebraeus, Graecus, Latinus, trilinguis" (III,6).<sup>29</sup> Linguistic skills, encyclopedic knowledge, not to speak of his profound ascetic life, made Jerome especially suited for the task of translating the Bible (BROWN, 1992, p. 87). Jerome, in fact, put all his acquired skills at the service of the Sacred Scriptures' both translation and interpretation.

Considering the restatement in varied formulations throughout his writings, it is possible to sustain that Jerome's main translative principle also encountered in his preface to Judith ("sense for sense for than word for word") guided him in a special manner in his work as translator.<sup>30</sup> In effect, although defending that Scripture ought to be translated word for word, for even the word order was involved in mystery (as in Letter 57,5 to his friend Pammachius of 395), in prac-

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28. See *Ibidem*. See also in that regard Kelly, 1975, p. 162. For a more detailed appreciation of the argument see Alfons Fürst, *Hieronimus. Askese und Wissenschaft in der Spätantike*, Ed. Freiburg im Bräsgau: Herder, 2016, pp. 83-122.

29. Regarding Jerome's academic formation see Fürst, *Hieronimus*, pp. 62-78; on his linguistic skills, see *Ibidem*, pp. 79-83.

30. On Jerome's translation technique with a constellation of examples from his works, see Dennis Brown, *Vir Trilinguis. A Study in the Biblical Exegesis of Saint Jerome*. Ed. Kampen (Netherlands): Pharos, 1992, pp. 87-120. See also Fürst, 2016, p. 83-84. Jerome's preface to his commentary on *Ecclesiastes* presents a four-step procedure in the translation of that book. Such technique may also have plausibly been followed for other books of the Old Testament (including *Tobit*). See Skemp, *The Vulgate of Tobit*, pp. 26-27.



tice, Jerome remains attached to the idea that a good translation should express the meaning, not the actual words, of the original. “A literal translation from one language into another obscures the sense” (Letter 57,6). Jerome goes on to say that even the Apostles and Evangelists “in translating the Old Testament scriptures have sought to give the meaning rather than the words (...)” (Letter 57,9); in the same letter, while defending some imprecisions found in the Luke’s Acts he once more sustains that “(...) in dealing with the Scriptures it is the sense we have to look and not the words” (Letter 57,10); and in his commentary to Galatians he is conclusive: “we do not think that the Gospel is in the words of the Scripture, but in its sense; not at the surface but in the inside; not on the leaves’ discourse but in the roots of the thought.”<sup>31</sup> Jerome’s positive principle, however, has had some particular consequences in some of Jerome’s translation, as in his version of Judges from 404/5, which appears more as a paraphrasis rather than a translation in strict sense.<sup>32</sup>

At the bottom, Jerome’s guiding principle is of literary order: the idioms of one language cannot be reproduced simpliciter in another. In that sense, Jerome would put an effort to keep the elegance of the Latin without altering the sense of the text (even if speaking of a translation to be expressed in the simple language that most appreciated).<sup>33</sup> Moreover, Jerome’s guiding principle seems to have a profound theological motivation. In fact, Jerome’s translation of Tobit, as for other books of the Vulgate (and the LXX), appears to be akin to Jewish theological exegesis found in the Midrashim. Tov’s definition of such translation procedure is enlightening: “theological exegesis may be expressed through the-

31. *Nec putemus in verbis Scripturarum esse Evangelium, sed in sensu: non in superficie sed in medula; non in sermonum foliis, sed in radice rationis* (Comm. on Galatians I, IIf [PL 26: 386f]). The same idea is also found in Letter 106,3.26.29f.54f and in the *Preface to Job*. Jerome’s statement reminds us of Benedict XVI’s in *Verbum Domini* (n. 38), when he said, “the word of God can never simply be equated with the letter of the text. To attain to it involves a progression and a process of understanding guided by the inner movement of the whole corpus, and hence it also has to become a vital process”.

32. See in that regard the interesting article of Jean-Marie Auwers. *De la Septante à la Vulgate. Les traducteurs face au texte biblique. Recherches de Science Religieuse*, Paris, vol. 106, n. 1, pp. 35-51, 2018.

33. See *Letter LIII*, 10; *Comm. in Ezek.* 47,1-5. On Jerome’s Latin in the Vulgate, remains a reference the study of G. Q. A. Meershoek, *Le Latin Biblique d’après Saint Jérôme*, Ed. Nijmegen: Dekker & Van de Vegt, 1966.

ological motivated choices of translation equivalents, in changes in words and verses (either small or great) or in expansions or omissions of ideas considered offensive” (1992, p. 127-128.)<sup>34</sup> In some of Jerome’s renderings it is noticed a pointedly Messianic or otherwise Christian implication, in some cases more than his Vorlage permitted. Such renderings emerge clearly as the result of sharpening the moral and religious value of the text with a Christian sense, such so that Rufinus (Apol. c. Hier. 2,27) would charge him of introducing countless doctrinal corrections.<sup>35</sup> In any case, imbued as he was by his main translative principle, it is not surprising that we should encounter it guiding Jerome also in his translation of the “Apocrypha” Judith and Tobit.

## *Exemplum from Tobit*

After our journey, even if in overview, through the fascinating panorama of Jerome’s work as translator, we may better appreciate the theory in practice in his Tobit translation. In this final section of our paper, we gloss on one of Jerome’s major expansions,<sup>36</sup> unique to the Vulgate of Tobit (2:11-19) as a case in point of Jerome’s work in the book. Such expansion, as Auwers rightly noticed, is the sole with the particularity of relating neither to the plot nor to one of the character’s discourse.<sup>37</sup> The table below presents in translation Tob 2,10-19 (Vg) compared with the main witnesses (Short Greek, Long Greek and Vetus Latina):<sup>38</sup>

34. Quoted in Skemp, *Vulgate of Tobit*, p. 15.

35. See Kelly, 1975, p.143.

36. Particularly famous in Jerome’s version is his expansion nicknamed “Tobias’ nights” in Tob 6,18-22. In it, through the angel’s mouth is suggested a three-days abstention from intercourse to the newly wed and special dedication to prayer during that period, practice that influenced significantly on marriage advices in the Catholic Church until recently. See Kelly, 1975, p. 285. The underlying views of marriage in that text is found elsewhere in Jerome’s writings (see *Contra Vigilantium* 2). See in that regard Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 220. Skemp argues that the material “show signs of Jerome’s hand.” See Skemp, *The Vulgate of Tobit*, 236. The matter is still object of discussion. See also in that regard Jean-Marie Auwers, *Tobie 2,12-18 (vulgate) et la tradition latine d’interprétation du livre de Tobie*, in *L’esegesi dei Padri latini*, SEA 68 (2000) p. 77-82. Regarding that text Auwers notices Jerome’s dependence also on Cyprian (*De mortalitate* 10).

37. See Auwers, *Tobie 2,12-18*, p. 80; Driussi, *Il libro di Tobia*, p. 128.

38. The translation is from Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, pp. 128.137-139. For v. 10, that puts the context, the translation is ours. The two references in curly braces refer where their respective contents are found in the major recensions.

Short Greek	Vetus Latina and Long Greek	Vulgate
<p><sup>10</sup> I did not know that sparrows were on the wall, and they discharged me their droppings, still warm, into my uncovered eyes, and white films were formed in my eyes. I went to doctors, but they did not help me. Ahiqar cared for me until he went to Elymais.</p> <p><sup>11</sup> My wife Hannah was earning money by doing women's work.</p>	<p><sup>10</sup> I did not know that sparrows were on the wall above me. Their droppings settled, still warm, into my eyes and produced white films. I went to doctors to be healed, but the more they applied their ointments, the more my eyes grew dim because of the white films until I became completely blind. For four years I remained incapable of seeing. All my relatives grieved over me, and Ahiqar cared for me for two years before he went to Elymais.</p> <p><sup>11</sup> At that time my wife Hannah was earning money by doing women's work.</p>	<p><sup>10</sup> It came to happen that coming one day home, tired from burying, he threw himself close to the wall and slept;</p> <p><sup>11</sup> warm dung from a nest of sparrows settled on his eyes and he became blind.</p> <p><sup>12</sup> However the Lord permitted this trial to come to him so that the example of his patience would be given to later generations, just as the holy Job.</p> <p><sup>13</sup> For since he always feared God from his infancy and observed His commandments, he did not grow bitter against God in that a plague of blindness had come upon him;</p> <p><sup>14</sup> he persisted rather unshaken in the fear of God, thanking God all the days of his life.</p> <p><sup>15</sup> For as rulers were critical of God because of blessed Job, so too those relatives and kinsfolk of his [Tobit's] derided his kind of life, saying,</p> <p><sup>16</sup> 'Where now is that hope of yours, for which you gave alms and buried people?' <b>{see Tob 2,14}</b></p> <p><sup>17</sup> Tobias [i.e. Tobit], however, rebuked them saying, 'Don't speak like that,</p> <p><sup>18</sup> because we are children of holy ones <b>{see Tob 4,12}</b>, and we await the kind of life that God is going to give to those who never change their faith in Him.'</p> <p><sup>19</sup> His wife Hannah went every day to work at weaving; she brought in by the work of her hands the wherewithal to live as she was able.</p>

In Jerome's text, father Tobit (Vg "Tobias") is presented first of all as an example of patience (v.12). The text speaks for itself as an illustration of Jerome's principle found also in his Judith's preface, of providing exempla for his readers. In the course of its hermeneutic history, Tobit-character has been

repeatedly interpreted in relationship with Job.<sup>39</sup> The “narrator” then goes on explaining and justifying Tobit’s conduct (vv.13-14) as rooted in his deep piety towards God from childhood. With clear biblical resonances (see Deut 5:29; 1 Kgs 18:12) such ideas fit well the author’s presentation of Tobit-character in the initial section (Tob 1:3 – 2:8). The narrator’s remarks emerge as an interpretive guide to the reader of (Jerome’s?) moral understanding of the story. In that regard, Driussi stated that, in this amplificatio, Jerome offered to the reader almost an interpretation of the whole book.<sup>40</sup> Interestingly next, Hannah’s rebuke to Tobit in most versions (2:14), becomes in Jerome’s text (vv.15-16) Tobit’s kinsfolk and relatives’ (perhaps to sharpen the presentation also of Hannah as a model of virtue, thinking of his women followers, with whose spiritual growth Jerome was constantly occupied). Finally, Tobit’s reply to them (vv.17-18) adds to the text an eschatological perspective, not clearly graspable in other versions of the story. It is common opinion among Tobit scholars that Tobit’s words in 3:6 (regarding the “everlasting home”) do not state a clear belief in an after-life.<sup>41</sup> In any case, we are before a theological interpretation even with New Testament resonances (see Jas 5:10-11; 1 Cor 10:13).

## Conclusion

Jerome’s translation specifically of the Book of Tobit opens us a fascinating window to his work as a translator per se. Translation, particularly of the Bible, is in fact an art. A good produce of that art requires several elements, beginning with linguistic skills beyond the average, of both source and target languages. It is demonstrated that Jerome excelled in both as few in late antiquity. That, however, is only one of the elements. In Jerome’s case, as his writings reveal, his previous education in the great conquests of classical culture, helped him

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39. See Driussi, *Il libro di Tobia*, 128. See also in that regard, Giancarlo Toloni, *La sofferenza del giusto: Giobbe e Tobia a confronto*, Studi Biblici Paideia 159, Ed. Brescia: Paideia, 2009.

40. See Driussi, *Il libro di Tobia*, p. 128. A similar view is held by Fitzmyer. See Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, p. 139.

41. See Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, p. 145; see also in that regard, Stefan Beyerle, ‘Release Me to Go to My Everlasting Home...’ (Tob 3:6): A Belief in an Afterlife in Late Wisdom Literature? *in* *The Book of Tobit - Text, Tradition, Theology*. Papers of the First International Conference on the Deuterocanonical Books, Pápa, Hungary, 20-21 May, 2004 (ed. G. Xeravits – J. Zsengellér), Ed. Leiden: Brill, 2005, pp. 71-88.

in a special manner to dig deeper into ancient texts and from those depths encounter senses that would suit the needs of and appeal to contemporary readers. Betterment of the text, interpretive guiding glosses with a Christian orientation, stress in characters' examples, rearrangement of contents: such elements appear to us, at least in general, to exemplify Jerome's main translation principle (sense for sense more than simply word for word) also in the case of Tobit, independently of the problems of his Vorlage(n) and the legitimacy of his Christian reception of ancient Jewish stories, with its pluses and minuses, perhaps some of Jerome's pen. In view of Tobit's canonical status for the Stridon, his creative work in it perhaps may be justified. Translation finally is not merely a question of rendering; it is also a question of receiving: new contexts are the humus for new meanings, the occasion for the text's seeds to yield new produce, finally, innate in them. Jerome's work as translator, also in the case of Tobit, it seems, is still instructive to us, modern translators and interpreters.

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