20 years ago Raija Sollamo published an article which dealt with the
Septuagint version of the book of Joshua.\(^1\) In this article she deline-
ated her view about the nature of the Hebrew Vorlage of the Greek
translation. According to her, the Hebrew Vorlage was different from the
Masoretic Text. She thought that the Masoretic Text is a later edition
of the book of Joshua, and that the Vorlage represented an older edition
of the book.\(^2\)

The importance of this article lies not in the description of the
relationship between the MT and the Hebrew Vorlage of the LXX, but
in the methodological ideas expressed and practiced in her article of
1987. According to Sollamo, anyone willing to describe the LXX text
of Joshua—and of any other book of the LXX—first has to solve two
difficult problems. 1) First, one has to reconstruct the Greek text that
the translator produced and to study the translation process, an area
I shall call translation technique. 2) Only after that can one turn to
questions related to the Hebrew Vorlage of the LXX.\(^3\)

When we study the translation process, translation technique, we must
make some presuppositions. First, we must assume that the Hebrew
Vorlage was close enough to the MT for us to use the MT as the basis for
further study. Secondly, we must carefully separate passages or parts of
the text where the Vorlage was likely similar to the MT from those where
the Vorlage was probably different from the MT. We must, then, base the
study of the translation technique only on those passages where the
Vorlage can be seen as close to the MT.\(^4\) It should not come as a surprise

\(^1\) Raija Sollamo, “Joosuan kirjan Septuaginta-käännöksen luonteesta,” Teologinen
\(^2\) Sollamo pointed out that e.g. Emanuel Tov held the same view about the Hebrew
Vorlage of LXX Joshua (Sollamo, “Joosuan kirja,” 198).
\(^3\) Sollamo, “Joosuan kirja,” 192.
to anyone that Sollamo’s contributions to the field of Septuagint studies and methodology have been important to me.  

In this article, I shall focus on the Vulgate and discuss the way Jerome produced his translation of Joshua. The translation technique of the Vulgate has not been subject of many studies. In fact, I do not know of any detailed study of the translation technique of Joshua in the Vulgate. One reason for this must be that Jerome himself described his translation technique to some extent, and accordingly we may suppose that his comments offer a reliable starting point. The most well known case of Jerome’s description of his translation technique comes from one of his letters to Pammachius. The letter is entitled De optimo genere interpretandi. Jerome wrote: Ego enim non solum fateor, sed libera voce profiteor me in interpretatione Graecorum absque scripturis sanctis, ubi et verborum ordo mysterium est, non verbum e verbo sed sensum exprimere de sensu (§5). Jerome, then, would normally translate Greek into Latin by following the sense of the text, but in case of the Bible he would follow a word for word method, because according to him even the word order in the Bible contains mystery and should be honoured accordingly. Thus, we may assume that the Vulgate is a literal translation of the Bible, or at least that Jerome intended to produce a literal translation when he began his translation of the OT.

Taking the claim that the Vulgate is a literal translation as our starting point let us next study some examples illustrating the way Jerome actually created the translation. I have selected the first examples from the area of syntax. When studying the translation technique of the LXX, syntax has proved to be a fruitful area of study. By considering issues like parataxis and the renderings of causal clauses, scholars have been able to draw conclusions that seem to have permanent significance when we try to understand how the LXX translators conducted their task of translation. I am assuming here that there is no difference methodologically between the LXX and the Vulgate, when it comes to the study of translation technique.

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5 See e.g. Seppo Sipilä, Between Literalness and Freedom (Publication of the Finnish Exegetical Society 75; Helsinki: Finnish Exegetical Society, 1999), 17–18.

6 The letter in question is number 57. The letter itself deals with the translation of a theological tractate and the criticism that some people had expressed concerning Jerome’s Latin translation of this particular tractate. For the critical edition of the letter, see Jerome, Lettres 3 (Texte établi et traduit par Jérôme Labourt; Paris: Société d’Edition „Les Belles Lettres“, 1953).