

HOW JEROME DEALT WITH GLOSSES

Matthew Kraus¹



ABSTRACT Difficult or unusual words are often explained in so-called glosses (concise annotated descriptions). This method is a particularly frequent element of Jerome's Hebrew scholarship, based on the grammatical tradition of the Classics. These appear quite frequently in his numerous commentaries, but it is remarkable that he regularly employs *id est*, *quae est* and other equivalents in the Vulgate. Jerome signals himself particularly clearly as a grammarian in the Book of Exodus, e.g. Ex 16:15 and Ex 15:23.

KEYWORDS Glosses – Book of Exodus – Jerome as a grammarian – *man hu*

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG Schwierige oder ungewöhnliche Wörter werden gerne in sogenannten Glossen (knappe kommentierte Beschreibungen) erklärend ausgelegt. Diese Methode ist ein besonders häufiges Element der hebräischen Gelehrsamkeit des Hieronymus, basierenden auf der grammatischen Tradition der Klassik. In diesen recht zahlreichen Kommentaren fällt auf, dass er regelmässig *id est*, *quae est* und weitere Entsprechungen in der Vulgata einsetzt. Besonders deutlich erscheint Hieronymus als Grammatiker im Buch Exodus, z.B. Ex 16,15 und Ex 15,23.

SCHLAGWORTE Glosse – Buch Exodus – Hieronymus als Grammatiker – *man hu*

Glosses: The interpretation of *glossemata*, difficult or unusual words, is a particularly common element in Jerome's Hebrew scholarship based on the Classical grammatical tradition.² This firmly situates him into the Greek and Roman grammatical tradition. Not only did ancient grammarians concentrate on explicating *glossemata*, Roman grammarians such as Servius would resort to a foreign language such as Greek to justify their explanation.³ While not a surprising feature in his many commentaries, he regularly uses *id est*, *quae est* and the equivalent in the Vulgate. We see the grammarian especially clearly in the gloss terminology added to Exodus 16:15 and 15:23.

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Judaic Studies, University of Cincinnati; 3508 French Hall West, University of Cincinnati 45221–0169;  1122463049;  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5252-180X>.

2. Michael Graves, *Jerome's Hebrew Philology. A Study Based on his Commentary on Jeremiah* (Vigiliae Christianae, Supplements, Vol. 90), Brill, Leiden – Boston 2007, 35.

3. Graves, *Jerome's Hebrew Philology*, 35–36.

In the case of Exod 16:15, he transliterates (*man hu*) adding the gloss *quod significat quid est hoc* ‘which means what is this’ thereby marking the Vulgate as a translation. The translation of Exodus here reads like a grammarian’s comment. In an actual commentary, he uses the same term: *tunc egressa est ‘laus’ sive ‘gratiarum actio’—hoc enim significat ‘thoda’*.⁴ The expansive rendering of עַל-כֵּן in Exod 15:23 as *unde et congruum loco nomen inposuit* ‘whence he coined a name appropriate to the place’ is similar to Servius on *Acrem Turnum* in Aen. 8.614: ‘*acrem Turnum.*’ *nam proprie apud nos acer est qui apud Graecos δεινός dicitur. nam fortem et vehementem, et asperum et amarum.* Like Servius (*proprie*), Jerome approves (*congruum*) of the term (*Mara*). The similarities continue because he relies on a foreign language (Latin) to explain the Hebrew term. The name of the place, *Marah*, sounds like the Latin term for bitter, *amara*, which aptly describes the place of bitter waters. He clearly takes advantage of this coincidence and in abbreviated fashion indicates that the name *Mara* is *congruum* because of the correlation between the Hebrew and the Latin.

The phenomenon of a gloss that is introduced as an explanation by the grammarian differs from the translation of a difficult term by itself which technically also constitutes a gloss. It should be noted, however, that Jerome possibly considers glosses an element of biblical style and a literal rendition of the Hebrew. For example, although the clarification *collegerunt cibos duplices id est duo gomor* logically follows from the Hebrew לֶקְטוּ לֶחֶם מִשְׁנָה שְׁנַי הָעֹמֶר לְאֶחָד ‘double bread, two omers’ (Exodus 16:22), the addition of *id est* indicates that he understood לֶקְטוּ לֶחֶם מִשְׁנָה as a gloss of שְׁנַי הָעֹמֶר. That is, Jerome is not explaining a difficult word, but suggesting that the Bible is explaining the difficult word. *Id est* represents a clarifying of addition intended by the literal sense of the text, as if glosses were part of the Bible’s rhetorical repertoire.

Similarly, in Numbers 13:25, *qui appellatus est Neelescol id est torrens Botri*, the Hebrew has *qui appellatus est* while Jerome adds the *id est torrens*. The Hebrew verse as a whole constitutes an explanatory gloss of *Nahal Eshkol*. Such glosses appear throughout the Vg such as Joshua 15:15 and Ruth 1:20. The passage in Ruth is particularly remarkable because *ne vocetis me Noemi id est pulchram* makes no sense without the gloss, while *sed vocate me Mara hoc est amaram quia valde me amaritudine replevit Omnipotens* works in both Latin and Hebrew. It should be noted that it is far more common for Jerome to transliterate, translate, or transliterate and translate Hebrew proper nouns with-

4. *Commentarii in Ieremiam Prophetam* VI (30:19).

out adding *id est* or other terms used to introduce a gloss. A plausible explanation would be an oral stage in the translation process. After hearing the Hebrew read aloud, Jerome would provide the Latin translation which the scribe would record. It would be natural for him to throw in the occasional *id est* or *hoc est*, which the scribe would dutifully copy.

The most common glosses are *id est* and *hoc est*. *Id est* appears over 100 times in the Vulgate: Gen. (8), Exod. (10), Lev. (11), Num. (15), Deut. (7), Jos. (7), Iud. (9), Ruth (1), 2 Sam. (2) 1 Kings (6), 2 Kings (2), 1 Chron. (4), 2 Chron. (6), Esdrae (1), Neh. (1), Esth. (4), Ier. (2), Ezechiel (3), Dan.1 (3), 2 Macc. (1), Mark (1), Rom. (3), 1 Cor. (2), Heb. (6), 1 Pet. (1). *Hoc est*, as a gloss, is rarer: Deut. 12:15, 23:3, 28:58, Judg. 20:18, 1 Kings 16:7, 1 Chron 13:13, 24:4, 2 Chron. 1:4,4:12, 6:39, 11:11, 26:18, Daniel 5:12, Matthew 27:8, Acts 1:19. Glosses appear much more frequently in the Heptateuch which were the last books that Jerome translated.