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**The Strata of the Armenian Versions of Esther,  
Judith, and Tobit and their  
Distinctive Translation Technique**

The Armenian version of Scripture should be interpreted against its Near Eastern background both with regard to its origins in ancient Israel and the wider matrix that presupposes, as well as within the tradition of reading and interpreting scripture in that part of the world up to the Late Antique period delineated by the historical, literary, and theological context in which the version emerged. Against that background this paper seeks to determine whether and to what degree it is possible to reconstruct the two early strata of the Armenian version in the above books that are described by the hagiographer Koriwn and have been textcritically established in other parts of Scripture, the first (Arm1) representing the original translation effected in the early years of the 5th century, while the second (Arm2) embodies a revision of the former conducted in the aftermath of the Council of Ephesus (431). This will be investigated in a detailed collation of the Armenian evidence in the Zohrabeian edition of 1805 with the requisite editions of the Göttingen Septuaginta and of the Leiden Pešitta initiative for the Syriac version, which has been shown to have had a textual or exegetical role in the translation of other biblical books. Once the matter of identifying versional strata and parent texts has been elucidated, the paper will focus on the distinctive translation technique the two strata manifest, illustrating them with a series of examples. Thereby it seeks to demonstrate the priority the translators accorded to the text's semantic dimension and associated rhetorical and theological questions, while the revisors concentrated on reencoding in Armenian the morphological and syntactic structure of the their Greek text even when on occasion this meant transgressing established Armenian idiom.