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PAPYRUS EGERTON 5: CHRISTIAN OR JEWISH?

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In 1935 the British papyrologists H. I. Bell and T. C. Skeat published five papyrus texts, Papyri Egerton 1–5, in their *Fragments of an Unknown Gospel*.<sup>1</sup> They regarded all of them as early Christian texts, as the subtitle of their book clearly indicated. It is the purpose of this paper to draw anew attention to one of these texts, namely Pap. Egerton 5, described by Bell and Skeat as a “Leaf from a Liturgical Book”. It is a single leaf from a codex, measuring 19 x 17 cm., with 17 lines of text on both sides, to be dated to the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century CE. Where in Egypt it was found is unknown; the papyrus is now in the British Library.<sup>2</sup> The editors say it is from a Christian liturgical book, even though they admit that its text is “if anything, more difficult than most of the earlier finds to identify” (56). The claim that it is from a *Christian* liturgical book that this papyrus leaf derives is, as we shall presently see, debatable. The text runs as follows:

- (A)
- 2 ἀγίασον, διάθρεψον, ἐπισύναξον, διοίκησον,  
στήρισον, δόξασον, βεβαίωσον, ποιμανον,  
4 ἀνάστησον, φώτισον, εἰρήνευσον, οἰκο-  
νόμησον, τελ(ε)ίωσον ----- τ[ὸν] λαδ[ν]  
6 ὄν ἐκτίσω, τὸν λαὸν τὸν [π]εριούσιον,  
τὸν λαὸν ὃν ἐλ[υ]τρώσω, [τ]ὸν λαὸν ὃν  
8 ἐκάλεσας, τὸν λαὸν σου, [τὰ] πρόβατα τῆς  
νομῆς σου. [ψ]υχῆς ἡμῶν ν[ο]σοῦσης ἰατρὸς  
10 μόνος εἶ σύ, σῆ ἀγαλλιάσει τῆ|ρεῖ νοσέοντας,  
ἡμᾶς θεράπευσον, μὴ ἡμᾶς ἀπ[ο]ρίψης  
12 ὡς ἀδέκτι[ο]λος σῆς θεραπέ[ι]ας. σου ἀπὸ  
στόματος λόγ[ο]ς υἰγιείας [ἐ]στὶν δοτήρ. B.  
14 ταῦτ' αἰτούμεθα παρ[ὰ] σοῦ], δέσποτα, παρὲς  
ὅσα ἡμάρτομεν, κάτ[ε]χε] εἶ τι ἀμαρτάνειν  
16 [φ]έρ(ε)ι, καὶ μὴ [ἡ]μῶν κ[α]ταλ[ο]γήσης ὅσα πα-  
ρανόμως ἐπράξαμεν. [σ]ῆς ἀνεξικακίας  
18 (B)  
ἔργον ἄφεις ἀμαρτιῶν. εὐπρεπὸν ἐστὶν,  
20 ἄφθιτε, θνητοῖς μὴ κιτέειν ἐπικήριοις,  
ὀλιγοβίοις, ἐπίμοχθον [γ]ῆν ἔχουσιν. εὐ-  
22 [ε]ργετῶν οὐ διαλείπεις, ἄφθονος γὰρ εἶ σύ,  
πᾶν δίδως οὐθὲν λαμβάνων, ἀνε-  
24 δεῆς γὰρ εἶ, πᾶν ἀγαθὸν [ἐ]στὶν σόν, κακὸν  
δὲ μόνον οὐ σόν, φαῦλόν ἐστὶν ὃ μὴ  
26 θέλεις, τέκος ἐννοιῶν ἡμετερῶν. -----  
προσδέξαι παρ' ἡμῶν τὰς ψαλμωδίας,  
28 τὰς ὑμνωδίας, τὰς εὐχάς, τὰς παρακλή-  
σεις, τὰς δεήσεις, τὰς ἀξιώσεις, τὰς {τὰς}  
30 ἔξομολογήσεις, τὰς αἰτήσεις, τὰς εὐχαριστίας,

<sup>1</sup> *Fragments of an Unknown Gospel and Other Early Christian Papyri*, London 1935.

<sup>2</sup> For a description of its physical features see also E. G. Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex*, Philadelphia 1977, 142, and J. van Haelst, *Catalogue des papyrus littéraires juifs et chrétiens*, Paris 1976, 300, no. 921 (here the papyrus is called P. Lond. Christ. 4). For photographs see Pls. I–II.

32 τὴν προθυμίαν, τὴν σπουδὴν, τὰς ἀγρυπνί-  
 34 ας, τὰς [.....]είας, τὰς χαμευνίας, τὰς  
 εὐκτηρίους φωνᾶς. φιλόανθρωπον ἔχ[ον-]  
 τες δεσπότην σέ, τὸν αἰών[ι]ων βασιλέα,  
 ἵκετεύομεν τὰ καθ' ἡμᾶς οἴκτου ἄξια ...<sup>3</sup>

Read in line 19 εὐπρεπές, in line 20 κοτέειν.

Unfortunately, the text breaks off in the middle of the prayer. The letters A and B in the upper margins of verso and recto respectively might be taken to be page numbers, but the occurrence of the letter B at the end of line 13 seems to point in another direction. If the prayer in the middle of which the first page (verso) begins is prayer A, the header may have been added to indicate that fact, just as B may well have been added as a header to the second page (recto) to indicate that this page continues the text of prayer B which had started at line 14 of the previous page. So it would seem that we have here the last 13 lines of prayer A and the first 21 lines of prayer B. However, the abrupt ending of text A and the equally abrupt beginning of text B seem to militate against the assumption that we have to do here with the complete text of liturgical prayers, the editors say. They compare for this numbering of prayers the Byzantine *Prayers of the Faithful* (Εὐχαὶ πιστῶν α', β') and suggest that "the papyrus contains some part of the Mass of the Faithful" (56). At the same time they have to admit, however, that the text of the prayers does not show the slightest resemblance to any of the *Prayers of the Faithful* in Byzantine liturgies. Phraseology and vocabulary are entirely different and there is no reference whatever to the Oblation. Also comparison with the Egyptian Rite or other extant liturgies turns out to be of little help for there is no trace of similarity to be found in the prayers of these documents. The prayers of the papyrus do use for the most part a Biblical vocabulary, but the composer made no use of quotations from the Biblical text,<sup>4</sup> much unlike "the centos of Biblical phrases which make up so large a part of extant liturgies" (57). After having noted the composer's preference for epic diction – they point to words such as ἄδεκτος, ἄφθιτος, κοτέειν, ἐπικήριος, τέκος, εὐκτήριος – the editors leave it at that. Ever since this publication only two other scholars have paid attention to this text, both of them, however, regarding the text as an early Jewish prayer.

In the *Journal of Theological Studies* of 1939 Joseph Wahrhaftig published a short article to the effect that the papyrus contains a Jewish prayer.<sup>5</sup> He points out that the editors' thesis that the prayer is

<sup>3</sup> In the translation by Bell and Skeat:

(1) A [= verso]

"(2) sanctify, sustain, gather, govern, (3) establish, glorify, confirm, pasture, (4) raise up (?), enlighten, pacify, (5) administer, perfect – the people (6) which Thou hast established, the peculiar people, (7) the people which Thou hast ransomed, the people which (8) Thou hast called, Thy people, the sheep of (9) Thy pasture. Thou art the only physician (10) of our ailing souls, keep us in Thy joy (?), heal us (11) in sickness, cast us not away (12) as unfit to receive Thy healing. The word (13) of Thy mouth is the giver of health.

B. (14). These things we beg of Thee, Master; remit (15) whatever we have done amiss, check (?) whatever leads (?) us (16) to sin, neither record against us all that we (17) have done unlawfully. Forgiveness of sin

(18) B [= recto]

(19) is the expression of Thy long-suffering; it is a fair thing, (20) o Immortal, not to be wrath with mortals, doomed to destruction, (21) short-lived, inhabiting a toilsome world. (22) Never dost Thou cease to do good, for Thou art bountiful, (23) Thou givest all, taking nought, for (24) Thou lackest nothing; every righteous thing is Thine, unrighteousness (25) alone is not Thine. Evil is that which Thou wouldst (26) not, the child of our imaginations. (27) Receive from us these psalmodies, (28) these hymnodies, these prayers, these supplications, (29) these entreaties, these requests, these (30) confessions, these petitions, these thanksgivings, (31) this readiness, this earnestness, these vigils, (32) these [...], these couchings upon the earth, these (33) prayerful utterances. Having a kindly (34) master in Thee, the eternal King, (35) we beseech Thee [to behold?] our pitiful state . . ."

<sup>4</sup> With the possible exception of Ps. 78:13 in line 8.

<sup>5</sup> A Jewish Prayer in a Greek Papyrus, *JTS* 40 (1939) 376–381. The article was translated from the German by J. N. Sanders, who occasionally inserts some critical notes of his own.

Christian involves great difficulties, because the text lacks any allusions to anything specifically Christian and cannot be related to any known liturgy. Even though the text cannot be identified with any extant Jewish prayer either, there are nevertheless several points of connexion between the fragment and Jewish liturgy. Many of the expressions in the text can be directly translated back into Hebrew, which suggests that the author thought in Hebrew or followed a Hebrew model. Using Biblical language and allusions without direct quotations is characteristic of many ancient Jewish prayers, as for instance the Eighteen Benedictions (usually called *Shemoneh 'Esreh* or *Amidah*). Also the litany-like repetitions have their parallels in Jewish prayers. Wahrhaftig discovers five complete sections in our text: lines 2–8 ask God to sanctify, protect etc. his people; lines 9–13 contain a petition for the healing of the soul; the third section, lines 14–21, is a prayer for protection from and forgiveness of sins; lines 22–26 praise God's great goodness; section five, in lines 27–33, contains a petition to accept the prayers. The concluding lines, 33–35, are the beginning of a new prayer, most of which is now lost. Seemingly Christian vocabulary, as for instance the use of  $\phi\omega\rho\acute{\iota}\zeta\epsilon\upsilon\nu$  in line 4, can be completely explained in Jewish terms; giving it its Christian connotation – here 'to baptize' – would make nonsense of the text. Whereas the word  $\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\chi\alpha\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\iota}\alpha$  in the singular is used in Christian literature of the period always in the sense of 'eucharist', its use in the plural here undoubtedly is the equivalent of *berakhoth* ('blessings, prayers'). The emphasis on 'the people', that God has "sanctified, sustained, gathered, governed, established, glorified, confirmed, pastured, raised up, enlightened, pacified, administered, and perfected" (2–5) is too typical of Jewish prayers as to be able to receive a Christian interpretation. And the expression  $\alpha\acute{\iota}\omega\nu\iota\omicron\varsigma\ \beta\alpha\sigma\iota\lambda\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\varsigma$  (34) is a rendering of *melekh ha'olam* ('King of the universe'). It is not a perfect rendering, but the composer sometimes made minor mistakes in translating Hebrew terms. So, for instance, in line 6 he speaks of the people  $\delta\upsilon\nu\ \epsilon\acute{\kappa}\tau\acute{\iota}\sigma\omega$ , 'which Thou hast created', whereas it should probably have been 'which Thou hast acquired', (*'am zu qanita*).<sup>6</sup> Wahrhaftig concludes that our text is most probably a paraphrase of the Shemoneh 'Esreh. Section 1 (sanctification, sustenance, etc.) parallels the first benediction of the Shemoneh 'Esreh, section 2 (healing) the fourth benediction, section 3 (forgiveness) the second benediction, section 4 (mercy) the third benediction, section 5 (the acceptance of prayer) the fifth benediction, and the final lines echo the sixth benediction of the Shemoneh 'Esreh. The order is almost identical, and in view of some echoes of the liturgy for Yom Kippur (fasting, vigils) it would seem that the papyrus contains a paraphrase of the Amidah for the Day of Atonement of which the form was not yet fixed in those early days. "Thus the intention of the author of the text preserved in this fragment was to put before a congregation of Egyptian Jews who spoke Greek and had very little command of Hebrew – or before one such Jew – the heart of the daily prayer – perhaps of that for the Day of Atonement – namely, the Shemoneh 'Esreh."

Some years later Arthur Marmorstein published an article in the *Jewish Quarterly Review* on what he called the oldest form of the Eighteen Benedictions.<sup>7</sup> He tries to demonstrate that this new Greek fragment is a new source in the never ending search for the oldest form of the Amidah. He agrees in many respects with Wahrhaftig, but denies that it was the Shemoneh 'Esreh for the Day of Atonement that was the source of the Greek prayer. "The text is a translation of the daily *Sh(emoneh) E(sreh)*" (138). Marmorstein sees in the papyrus "a leaf from the oldest Jewish prayerbook extant" (138), in use among the Greek speaking Jews from Egypt, and possibly in other parts of the Diaspora as well. He conjectures that the text is probably contemporaneous with the Hebrew Ben Sira and hence welcomes the find, "although presented in Greek" (138), as of major importance in rediscovering the earliest form of the Amidah.

Marmorstein widely differs from Wahrhaftig in the details of interpretation, as may be clear from the following. The thirteen requests for God's people in the form of imperatives, which form the opening lines of the prayer, are not just the equivalent of the first benediction of the Amidah but can be iden-

<sup>6</sup> Wahrhaftig is right here but for the wrong reasons; see below the footnote on line 6.

<sup>7</sup> *The Oldest Form of the Eighteen Benedictions*, *JQR* 34 (1943/44) 137–159.

tified with several *berakhoth* in the Shemoneh 'Esreh, some of them easily, others with some difficulty. The easy instances are the following:<sup>8</sup> 'sanctify' (1) is the *Qedusha* (3, sanctification), 'sustain' (2) is the *Birkat ha-Shanim* (9, blessing of the years), 'gather' (3) is the *Qibbuts Geluyoth* (10, gathering of the dispersion), and 'govern' (4) is *Hashavat ha-Mishpat* (11, establishment of justice). Marmorstein says that it cannot be pure accident that the numbers 2, 3, and 4 of the fragment are in the same order as 9, 10, and 11 in the Amidah. The remaining imperatives are to be divided into two groups, one of which can still relatively easily be identified, the other however less easily. Probably nr. 10, 'enlighten', is *Da'at* (4, knowledge), and nr. 11, 'pacify', is the *Birkat Shalom* (19, blessing of peace). Maybe nr. 12, 'administer', could refer to *Avodah* (17, temple service), and nr. 7, 'pasture', could have arisen from a misreading of *Ge'ula* (7, redemption) in which the initial word *r'h* (*re'eh* = see) was read as *r'h* (*ro'eh* = shepherd). But from here onwards the identifications begin to become more and more uncertain. In the end Marmorstein is left with five items for which he cannot find an equivalent in the Amidah.

Then he turns to the four longer prayers of the papyrus and remarks that the 13 one-verb-petitions plus the 4 longer prayers add up to 17, which "is the actual number of the original *Sh.E.*" (141). Of the four fuller prayers (on health, forgiveness, thanksgiving, acceptance) the prayer for health turns out to be the equivalent of *Refu'a* (8, healing), the one for forgiveness is *Selichah* (6, forgiveness), thanksgiving is *Hoda'a* (18, thanksgiving), and the one for the acceptance of prayers is *Shomea' Tefillah* (16, He who hears the prayer). Marmorstein further points out a remarkable coincidence: the fourth of the longer prayers contains 15 different expressions for liturgical forms and gestures (lines 27–33), but three other liturgical texts from the Siddur (Jewish prayer book), namely the *Kaddish*, the *Yishtabach*, and the *Emet we-yatziv*, also contain 15 expressions of praise and glory, and there are to be found 15 expressions of praise in the *Barukh she-amar* as well, as had already been remarked in the Middle Ages.<sup>9</sup> Marmorstein then summarizes the provisional results of his search: the Greek prayer contains 17 benedictions, as did the original Shemoneh Esreh, 10 of which can be regarded with certainty as corresponding to one another, and 2 hypothetically; five are lacking a clear counterpart. These five are in the Greek text 'establish' (5), 'glorify' (6), 'confirm' (7), 'raise up' (9), and 'perfect' (13); and in the Shemoneh Esreh *Avoth* (1, fathers), *Gevuroth* (2, mighty acts), *Teshuva* (5, repentance), *Al ha-tzadiqim* (13, on the righteous ones), and *Binyan Yerushalayim* (14, the rebuilding of Jerusalem), the latter combined with *Mashiach ben David* (15, Messiah son of David) according to the old Palestinian version. The *Birkat ha-minim* (12, blessing [= curse] of the heretics) had not yet been made part of the Amidah in the early date Marmorstein adopts for it. He now identifies 'glorify' (6) with *Avoth*, since "the keynote of the benediction is the *glorification of God*" (151). The glorification of the people that the Greek text speaks of is to be understood as God's glory through his people. 'Confirm' (7) is probably to be identified with *Gevuroth* since that benediction confirms the people's trust in God as *mechayyeh ha-metim* (= he who quickens the dead). The request 'perfect' (13) can now be seen to be the equivalent of *Teshuva* since true repentance means perfection. 'Raise up' (9) must remain doubtful if only because the Greek text is only partly readable here and uncertain, but as well as 'establish' (5) it "may have been the forerunner of the benediction for Jerusalem" (153). But these must remain guesses. Finally Marmorstein concludes his study with a curious piece of uncritical Talmud exegesis to the effect that the Amidah with 17 benedictions is a very ancient institution that existed long before the destruction of the Second Temple. The Greek fragment may reflect that prayer in one of its earliest stages of development. In this shape the prayer survived till after the destruction of the Temple. The final ordering and arrangement of the benedictions as well as the elaboration of their contents were undertaken in Javne, but our papyrus demonstrates that in many cases the 17 benedictions grew out of only one word (one verb) or very brief formulae. "The development of the *Sh.E.* proved that the oldest

<sup>8</sup> The numbers after the imperatives refer to their respective position in the papyrus text, the numbers after the Hebrew names of the *berakhot* refer to their order in the Amidah.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 147.

form was actually very brief. As late as the middle of the third century such short *Sh.E.* have been current, e.g. the prayer called *havinenu* (see b. Ber. 29a, pal. Ber. 2.4)” (158–9). Marmorstein also suggests that the shortened forms of the Shemoneh Esreh actually reflected the older forms and that these enable us to see that the earliest form of the Amidah was very different from the final composition of the Amoraic period. Thanks to the papyrus find, “we may have recovered the oldest form of Jewish prayer used in the last century of the Temple. We recover further a clear and eloquent testimony for the high religious standard of the ordinary Jew in the time of Jesus” (159). Thus Marmorstein.

Remarkably enough, there are no publications whatever on our text from the last 55 years.<sup>10</sup> It is hard to say what are the reasons for this more than half a century of neglect of such a fascinating and potentially important document. This papyrus text deserves to be saved from oblivion, however, and the following paragraphs have exactly that purpose.

The most obvious question is: should the prayer text be regarded as Christian or as Jewish? The case of the two Jewish scholars is strong here. To be sure, the argument that there is not to be found anything specifically Christian in the prayer text does not in itself constitute a decisive proof that the prayer is non-Christian, for there are some other instances of ancient prayers that we know to be Christian on other grounds but whose contents are completely devoid of Christian characteristics. A striking example is Pap. Berlin 9794, a document from the second half of the third century containing five Christian prayers for various occasions, four of which are explicitly Christian but one of which is only implicitly so; it lacks anything characteristically Christian, being in fact no more than a free rendering of the concluding prayer of the Hermetic treatise *Poimandres* (ch. 31–32). So the lack of Christian specifics is not conclusive of itself. However, (1) it is only a very tiny minority of the hundreds of early Christian prayer texts that are extant to which this applies; (2) this kind of non-explicitly Christian prayers are always very short texts. In longer Christian prayer texts sooner or later either Jesus Christ is mentioned or there is an otherwise undeniable reference to some Christian idea or a New Testament passage. The fact that in our two full pages of prayer text there is nothing of the sort militates strongly against a Christian origin, the more so since the emphatic passage on forgiveness (14–19) has no reference whatever to Christ’s mediatorship in regard to God’s forgiveness. Moreover, in this case this negative argument is reinforced by positive ones, the most important of them being the following. Firstly, many elements in the papyrus text have their closest parallels in Jewish prayer texts. Now Jewish prayer texts could have been adopted and used by Christians, as is clearly proven by the collection of Jewish liturgical documents in the seventh book of the *Apostolic Constitutions*.<sup>11</sup> In such known cases, however, the originally Jewish documents were always christianized to a greater or lesser degree. Not the slightest christianization is discernible, however, in Pap. Egerton 5. Secondly, not only are the closest parallels those in Jewish prayer texts, but these parallels derive for the most part from one specific Jewish prayer, namely the Amidah, as both Wahrhaftig and Marmorstein have demonstrated. It would seem, therefore, that we can safely follow them in their assumption that the prayer is Jewish.<sup>12</sup>

Does that imply that we also have to follow their suggestion that we have here a text that represents one of the oldest stages of the Amidah?

<sup>10</sup> M. Latke, *Hymnus. Materialien zu einer Geschichte der antiken Hymnologie*, Freiburg–Göttingen 1991, 265, still lists Pap. Egerton 5 under Christian Papyri and does not give any bibliography after 1935. C. H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt*, London 1979, 78, just mentions the papyrus (here called ‘P. Lond. Christ. 5’) as one that has “been thought to be Jewish”. H. Leclercq, in the lengthy lemma “Papyrus” in the *Dictionnaire d’archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie XIII* (Paris 1937) 1370–1520, quotes all of the papyrus (in both Greek and French) as a Christian “fragment liturgique” (1474). Cf. also E. J. Bickerman, *The Civic Prayer for Jerusalem*, HTR 55 (1962) 169 n. 28.

<sup>11</sup> See D. A. Fiensy, *Prayers Alleged to be Jewish. An Examination of the Constitutiones Apostolorum*, Chico CA 1985.

<sup>12</sup> That the leaf is from a codex is no argument to the contrary. Even though the codex was probably an early Christian invention, after the third century Jews started to use the codex instead of the scroll; see Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief* 75–76.

Here the ground becomes more slippery. Wahrhaftig, who knew the Shemoneh Esreh very well, could find parallels to only 6 benedictions of this prayer, whereas Marmorstein found parallels to no less than 16 *berakhoth* of the Amidah. This should make us wary of overhasty conclusions. Marmorstein may have suffered from a certain degree of ‘Entdeckerfreude’. We should also bear in mind that comparison of our papyrus text with the Amidah is much complicated by the fact that there has *never* been a fixed text of *all* the *berakhot* that was accepted as authoritative by *all* Jewish communities. All we have is a wide variety of versions, so a comparison should focus on motifs and meanings rather than on words and phrases.

Let us begin with the very different evaluations of the 13 opening imperatives by Wahrhaftig and Marmorstein. Of course, they most probably were not the opening lines of the prayer, since they lack any form of address, but we have no way of knowing what preceded these lines. Now Wahrhaftig regards these as a rendering of or the equivalent of the first *berakhah* of the Amidah (*Avoth*), without giving any arguments for this view, whereas Marmorstein sees in them short versions of no less than 13 *berakhoth* of the Amidah, only δόξασον (‘glorify’, line 3) corresponding to *Avoth*. Is either of these suggestions very probable and, if so, which is the more probable one? To me it seems almost absurd to see these 13 imperatives, followed – to be sure – by ‘the people which you have made your own’ etc., as in any way equivalent to the first Benediction, whichever version of that *berakhah* one takes. But it is hardly easier to believe that the imperatival statement ‘glorify your people’ could render the gist of the benediction in *Avoth*. So both scholars have presented a very weak case as far as *Avoth* is concerned.

What about Marmorstein’s other identifications of the list of imperatives? It has to be admitted that here he sometimes makes a stronger case. That ‘sanctify’ (ἀγιάσον) reminds one of the *Qedusha*, even though there it is God himself not his people who is sanctified, cannot be denied. And that the second, third, and fourth of the imperatives (‘sustain, gather, govern’) show a strong similarity in subject and order to the ninth, tenth, and eleventh of the *berakhoth* in the Amidah (*Birkat ha-Shanim*, *Qibbutz Geluyoth*, and *Hashavat ha-Mishpat*) is clear to any reader. So here Marmorstein seems to move towards firmer ground. That there is a thematic affinity between the imperative ‘enlighten’ (sc. your people) and the fourth *berakhah*, i.e. *Da‘at* (knowledge), and between ‘give peace’ and the *Birkat Shalom* (19, blessing of peace), also stands to reason. But the other identifications as far as the 13 imperatives are concerned are much too speculative. I for one cannot see, for instance, how ‘administer’ (οἰκονόμησον) could possibly be a form of the benediction *Avodah* (temple service), and that ‘perfect’ (τελείωσον) is to be identified with *Teshuva* (repentance) since repentance leads to perfection is ingenious but hardly constitutes a convincing proof. On the other hand, I would suggest one further identification: ‘raise up’ (ἀνάστησον) with *Gevuroth* (2, mighty acts) because of that *berakhah*’s emphasis on the resurrection of the dead (*techiyyat ha-metim*).

But we are still left with the four longer prayers in lines 9–33. I would submit that here Marmorstein has his strongest case. It can hardly be coincidental that these four prayers on healing, forgiveness, thanksgiving, and acceptance of prayers have their precise counterparts in the benedictions *Refu‘a*, *Selichah*, *Hoda‘a*, and *Shomea‘ Tefillah*. One might of course object here that themes such as healing, forgiveness, thanksgiving and acceptance of prayers are so commonplace in ancient prayers that nothing can be built on such an observation. But I think Marmorstein’s observations cannot be dismissed that easily. When we take a closer look at the materials we see, for instance, that both prayers for health or healing contain three imperatives and an expression of praise, that the prayers for forgiveness of sins show a remarkable similarity in wording (‘forgive us for we have sinned’ – ‘forgive us what we have sinned’), that both thanksgiving prayers stress God’s never ending goodness and beneficence, and that both prayers for acceptance are repetitive in that they stress the theme of God’s acceptance of the prayers by means of various ways of phrasing it.<sup>13</sup> I suggest that all this cannot be sheer coincidence.

<sup>13</sup> This becomes even clearer if comparison is made with the expanded versions (compare *qolenu*, *tefillatenu*, *tachanunim* with *euchai*, *de‘seis*, *ait‘seis*, *axiōseis*).

There must at least be some connection between these Greek prayer texts and the Hebrew Amidah. Let us face the facts: Here is a prayer text that bristles with biblical language and motifs; it cannot possibly be Christian (and definitely is not pagan), so it must be Jewish; at least 10 of the 17 petitions (6 in the series of 13 short imperatives, 4 in the longer prayers) show an undeniable thematic affinity with *berakhoth* in the most central one of Jewish prayers, the Amidah. And this counting is based only on those of Marmorstein's identifications which are likely to be right. We could add two equations of my own: the already mentioned 'raise up' with *Gevuroth*, and that of the final line, "We beseech Thee to act (?) according to our pitiful state" (35), with *Ge'ula*, the seventh *berakhah*, which begins with "Look upon our affliction". In that case we could make at least 12 equations between the papyrus and the Amidah. What are we to make of that?

Marmorstein says we have here one of the oldest forms of the Amidah, dating back to the Second Temple Period, but this is unacceptable. The papyrus is to be dated to the final decades of the fourth or the opening decades of the fifth century, and even though the text can reasonably be assumed to be older than that, there is no proof whatever that it derives from the period before 70, let alone the beginning of the second century BCE, as he would have us believe. From a theoretical point of view there are four possibilities.

The first one is that we have to do here with a Jewish prayer but that the thematic similarities with *berakhoth* in the Shemoneh Esreh are pure coincidence and due to the fact that these are quite common requests for any Jewish prayer. This possibility cannot be ruled out entirely, but I do not think it is the most likely one. The second one is that we have here an early form of the Amidah that demonstrates that many if not all of the *berakhoth* developed out of single imperatives. This is Marmorstein's position, but the problem here is that it is very hard to envisage a stage in which only a small number of these imperatives had begun to develop into more elaborated prayers, whereas the others remained in their rudimental form. Moreover, why would this very early form remain in use in Egypt some 400 to 500 years after its composition? The third possibility is that we have here an abbreviated Amidah, a *tefilah qetsarah* (shortened prayer), in which the Amidah (or part of it) is reduced to its essentials. We know that this kind of shortened Shemoneh Esreh existed in Tannaitic and Amoraic times and the Talmud even presents us with the text of such a condensed version of the Amidah (the so-called *Havinenu*).<sup>14</sup> So this suggestion by Marmorstein should be seriously considered, even though one need not accept his corollary thesis that this shortened form reflected the oldest form of the Amidah. One has to explain, however, why in the Greek papyrus some of the *berakhoth* were so drastically shortened that nothing more than one word (an imperative) was left and that in this way 13 benedictions were compressed into one, whereas 4 (or 5) others were left unaltered. Here, however, the fact that the manuscript indicates by means of an A and a B that there is a distinction between the section with the string of imperatives on the one hand and the longer prayers on the other may be of some use. The Talmud's example of a shortened Shemoneh Esreh in *Berakhoth* 29a makes clear that according to the rabbis (or some rabbis) not all *berakhoth* lent themselves to abbreviation. According to Talmud, Mar Samuel (third cent. CE) includes the much abbreviated contents of only the thirteen (or twelve) middle benedictions into one; the first three and the last three he leaves intact. Now unfortunately neither can the 13 imperatives from the Greek prayer's opening lines be said to coincide with the thirteen (or twelve) middle benedictions of the Amidah nor can the 4 longer prayers be said to coincide with the first and last three benedictions, even though there is some overlap. The important thing, however, is the principle of distinction: some

<sup>14</sup> See m. Ber. IV 3 with b. Ber. 29a (also t. Ber. III 7 and j. Ber. IV 3, 8a). Samuel's well-known version of an abbreviated Shemoneh Esreh in the Talmud runs as follows: "Give us discernment (*havinenu*), o Lord, to know Thy ways, and circumcise our heart to fear Thee, and forgive us so that we may be redeemed, and keep us far from our sufferings, and fatten us in the pastures of Thy land, and gather our dispersions from the four corners of the earth, and let them who err from Thy prescriptions be punished, and lift up Thy hand against the wicked, and let the righteous rejoice in the building of Thy city and the establishment of the Temple and in the exalting of the horn of David Thy servant and the preparation of a light for the son of Jesse the Messiah; before we call mayest Thou answer; blessed art Thou, o Lord, who hearkenest to prayer."

prayers (13 in both cases!) may be shortened, others may not. In this respect one could reasonably suggest that Samuel's example was just one of many possibilities of which we now see another one in our papyrus.<sup>15</sup> If the verso side of the papyrus would contain the opening line of the prayer – which is not certain, as we have seen – its abruptness is nicely paralleled by what Joseph Heinemann has called “the aggressive manner of address” of several forms of *tefillah qetsarah*.<sup>16</sup> What remains problematic in this solution, however, is that exactly in the abbreviated part we find a rather drastic expansion: lines 5–9, with their five times repeated ‘the people’, cannot really be said to contribute to the shortening of the prayers. Therefore, a somewhat more sophisticated solution is to be offered, and that brings us to the fourth possibility.

This fourth option is no more than a revision or adaptation of the third. I envisage the following process. The Shemoneh Esreh gradually evolved in the period from the first through the fourth centuries. If ever there was an ‘Urtext’ – which is very doubtful<sup>17</sup> – we will never be able to reconstruct it because the materials at our disposal simply do not enable us to do so. Our Greek papyrus does not contain the ‘oldest form’, let alone the ‘Urtext’, of the Amidah either. As soon as building blocks of what later was to become the Amidah, with a not yet fixed number of *berakhoth* in a not yet fixed order<sup>18</sup> and a not yet fixed textual form,<sup>19</sup> began to spread outside Palestine, various Diaspora communities developed their own variants of this prayer in Greek, suited to their own needs and, in a predominantly Greek environment, sometimes with originally Greek elements added.<sup>20</sup> Especially in areas of the Diaspora where the rabbis had not yet gained influence or dominance, the communities felt free to develop their own brand of Amidah. Maybe one should not even speak about the Amidah here, but about a generally recognized model or pattern of prayer that was adopted by both Palestinian and Diaspora Jews and adapted differently in different communities, and that contained the building blocks of what in the hands of the later rabbis was to become the Amidah. In Egypt, the small Jewish communities left after the destructive war of 115–117 CE, developed their own forms of prayer in the period from the middle of the second to the middle of the fourth century. The community (-ies) from which our papyrus derives possibly knew a tradition about a shortened Amidah, or perhaps even knew only a shortened Amidah, but a different one from Samuel's instance mentioned in the Talmud (which is by and large section A of the papyrus). They also had traditions about other prayers connected to the shortened Amidah but of a more elaborated nature, which in their community had taken on a somewhat different shape than in rabbinic circles (which is by and large section B of the papyrus, though I do realize that I have to assume then that the copyist erred in putting the B four lines too late, in 13 instead of in 9). Different *berakhoth* than in rabbinic circles were abbreviated, different ones were kept in a longer form, but nonetheless, due to the fact that they worked with traditional material, their text is still recognizable for us as a form of the Amidah. The objection that the rabbinic rule is that an abbreviated Amidah was only meant to be used in a situation of emergency or pressing need<sup>21</sup> is not valid, for, as

<sup>15</sup> For abbreviated versions of the Seven Benedictions of the Amida see J. Heinemann, One Benediction Comprising Seven, REJ 125 (1966) 101–111.

<sup>16</sup> J. Heinemann, Prayer in the Talmud, Berlin 1977, 188.

<sup>17</sup> Elias Bickerman remarks about the Amidah: “It would be absurd to try to fix the ‘original’ wording of a traditional text. What we can hope to attain is the original meaning of a benediction” (‘Civic Prayer’ 164). Cf. also K. Kohler, The Origin and Composition of the Eighteen Benedictions with a Translation of the Corresponding Essene Prayers in the Apostolic Constitutions, HUCA 1 (1924) 392 (387–425); the Amidah is “the product of a gradual growth and development.” But see now especially the treatment by S. C. Reif, Judaism and Hebrew Prayer, Cambridge 1993, chs. 3–4.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. b. Ber. 34a: “The intermediate benedictions have no fixed order.”

<sup>19</sup> See e.g. I. Elbogen, Jewish Liturgy, Philadelphia–New York–Jerusalem 1993, 28; and Heinemann, Prayer, *passim*.

<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, below the note on line 24. References to synagogal liturgies in Greek in Reif, Judaism and Hebrew Prayer, 350 n. 47.

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., M. Nulman, The Encyclopedia of Jewish Prayer, Northvale NJ 1993, 171, who states this is the rule on the basis of rabbinic sources.

Elbogen already remarks, there is evidence that “even in public worship these abridged forms were in use.”<sup>22</sup> Apart from that, rabbinic rules were quite often ignored by the common people.

If there is truth in the hypothesis that we have here an early form of what was to become the Amidah, one of its striking aspects is that the text is totally devoid of references to the Patriarchs, to the people of Israel, to Jerusalem, and to the Messiah. In other words, national elements which would have made the prayer immediately recognizable as Jewish are absent. How is that to be explained? It cannot be excluded that in an early phase of its development the Amidah did lack these elements. It is also possible that, if some or all of these elements *were* present in one version in circulation, they were lacking in another. And one should not rule out the possibility that in an abridged version these elements simply dropped out. After all, the Talmudic text of the *Havinenu* (*Berakhot* 29a, quoted in n. 14) lacks the names of the Patriarchs, of Israel, and of Jerusalem; only the reference to the Messiah is retained. Be that as it may, the absence of these references should not be taken to imply that the prayer is not Jewish.

However, I have to concede honestly that a very different explanation cannot altogether be ruled out. As I have indicated before, we know that in some early Christian communities Jewish communal prayers were taken over and slightly christianized by adding references to Jesus Christ and the New Testament. Do we here perhaps have a case of a Jewish prayer, an abridged Amidah, taken over by Christians and ‘christianized’ only by the deletion of explicitly Jewish references? It does not seem to me a very viable hypothesis, but nothing is impossible in the world of late antiquity.

By way of appendix I offer an annotated translation that differs from the one by Bell and Skeat (see note 3) in that I will render the Greek text into a more modern idiom than they did and in that my understanding of the text is in some places slightly different from theirs.

(1) A [Verso]

(2) Make holy,<sup>23</sup> nourish,<sup>24</sup> gather,<sup>25</sup> govern,<sup>26</sup> (3) support,<sup>27</sup> glorify,<sup>28</sup> establish,<sup>29</sup> herd,<sup>30</sup> (4) raise up,<sup>31</sup> enlighten,<sup>32</sup> bring peace<sup>33</sup> (to), (5) administer,<sup>34</sup> make perfect<sup>35</sup> ---<sup>36</sup> the people (6) that you have made your own,<sup>37</sup> your special people,<sup>38</sup> (7) the people that you have redeemed,<sup>39</sup> the people that (8)

<sup>22</sup> Jewish Liturgy 54.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Ezek. 20:12 etc. References in the following notes are to the LXX.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Gen. 50:20–21 etc.

<sup>25</sup> Ps. 105(106):47; 146(147):2; Is. 11:12; 27:13; 56:8.

<sup>26</sup> Sap. Sal. 8:40.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Macc. 14:14.

<sup>28</sup> 1 Esdras 9:52.

<sup>29</sup> Ps. 118(119):28.

<sup>30</sup> 2 Kings 7:7.

<sup>31</sup> Amos 7:2.5

<sup>32</sup> Micha 7:8. Cf. 1 Kings 3:9–12; 2 Chron. 1:10.

<sup>33</sup> Job 5:24. ‘Give peace to your people’ would seem to me to be a more adequate translation of εἰρήνευσον than ‘pacify’ as Bell and Skeat have it, even though the construction is unusual.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Ps. 111(112):15

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Matt. 5:48; in a prayer context, Didache 10:5.

<sup>36</sup> Between the lists of imperatives and ‘the people’ the papyrus has a blank space with a stroke in the centre of the line. It may be tentatively suggested that it is the space where the Tetragrammaton should have been written in Hebrew characters but the scribe did not know how to write it. For other examples see Roberts, Manuscript 76–77.

<sup>37</sup> Here one has to read ἐκτίσω instead of ἐκτίσω – an evident case of itacism – in view of the fact that κτίζω is never used in medial forms and that Ex. 15:16 reads ὁ λαός σου ὃν ἐκτίσω, in a passage that has more echoes in lines 5–9. Note that in Deut. 32:6 it is said that God both ἔκτισεν and ἐκτίσατο His people Israel.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Ex. 19:5; 23:22 etc.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Ex. 6:6; 15:13.

you have called,<sup>40</sup> your people, the sheep which (9) you graze.<sup>41</sup> Of our sick soul you (10) are the only doctor,<sup>42</sup> keep those who are sick in your joy (?),<sup>43</sup> (11) heal us, do not throw us away (12) as not capable of receiving your healing.<sup>44</sup> The word (13) that goes out from your mouth<sup>45</sup> is the giver of health.

[B] (14) These things we ask you, Master,<sup>46</sup> forgive us (15) all the sins we did,<sup>47</sup> keep in check (?) what may lead us (16) to sin, and do not write down against us<sup>48</sup> all the (17) unlawful acts we committed. Forgiveness of sin

(18) B [Recto]

(19) is the work of your forbearance. It is fitting, (20) o imperishable one, not to act in wrath against mortals who are doomed to die, (21) who have only a short life, who live on a toilsome earth. (22) You do well<sup>49</sup> without interruption, for you are free from envy, (23) you give everything whereas you take nothing, for (24) you are in need of nothing,<sup>50</sup> every good thing is yours, evil (25) alone is not yours,<sup>51</sup> wicked is what you do (26) not want, a product of our thoughts. (27) Accept<sup>52</sup> from us these psalmodies, (28) these hymnodies, these prayers, these invocations, (29) these entreaties, these petitions, these (30) expressions of gratitude, these requests, these blessings, (31) this zeal, this earnestness, these vigils, (32) these [fasts?],<sup>53</sup> this lying on the ground,<sup>54</sup> (33) these prayerful sounds. Since we have in you a Master (34) that loves mankind, King of the Ages,<sup>55</sup> (35) we beseech you to act in agreement with your compassion for our present circumstances . . .

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<sup>40</sup> Is. 45:3 etc.

<sup>41</sup> Ps. 78(79):13; Cf. Ps. 22(23):1; 94(95):7; 99(100):3 etc.

<sup>42</sup> Jer. 17:14; 40:6. Here the idea of health is spiritualized, whereas in the benediction *Rephu'a* in the Shemoneh Esreh the accent is more on healing of the physically ill. However, the Palestinian version reads: "Heal us . . . from the sickness of our *heart*".

<sup>43</sup> This translation is a mere guess since the reading of the Greek is very uncertain. The papyrus has σὴ ἀγαλλ[.....]ρει which the editors tentatively restore to σὴ ἀγαλλ[ιάσει τή]ρει, which is strange Greek, however.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. in the Babylonian Talmud Shab. 12a: God as *rophe' choley 'ammo Yisra'el* (the one who heals the sick of his people Israel).

<sup>45</sup> Is. 55:11; Jos. 6:10; Esth. 7:8; Ps. 19:15; 36:4; 78:1; Prov. 5:7; 18:4; Eccles. 10:12.

<sup>46</sup> Though by far not as frequently as κύριος, as a form of address for God δεσπότης is often found in the LXX.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Ps. 50[51]:3-4.

<sup>48</sup> Here the idea is that of a heavenly book in which men's good and bad deeds are recorded. For καταγράφειν see Ex. 17:14 etc.

<sup>49</sup> God as welldoer: Ps. 12(13):6; 56(57):2 etc.

<sup>50</sup> Here it is emphasized that God does not lack anything, which is an idea derived from the later Platonic *theologia negativa*. Line 23 is almost literally identical to Corpus Hermeticum 5:10: πάντα δίδως καὶ οὐδὲν λαμβάνεις.

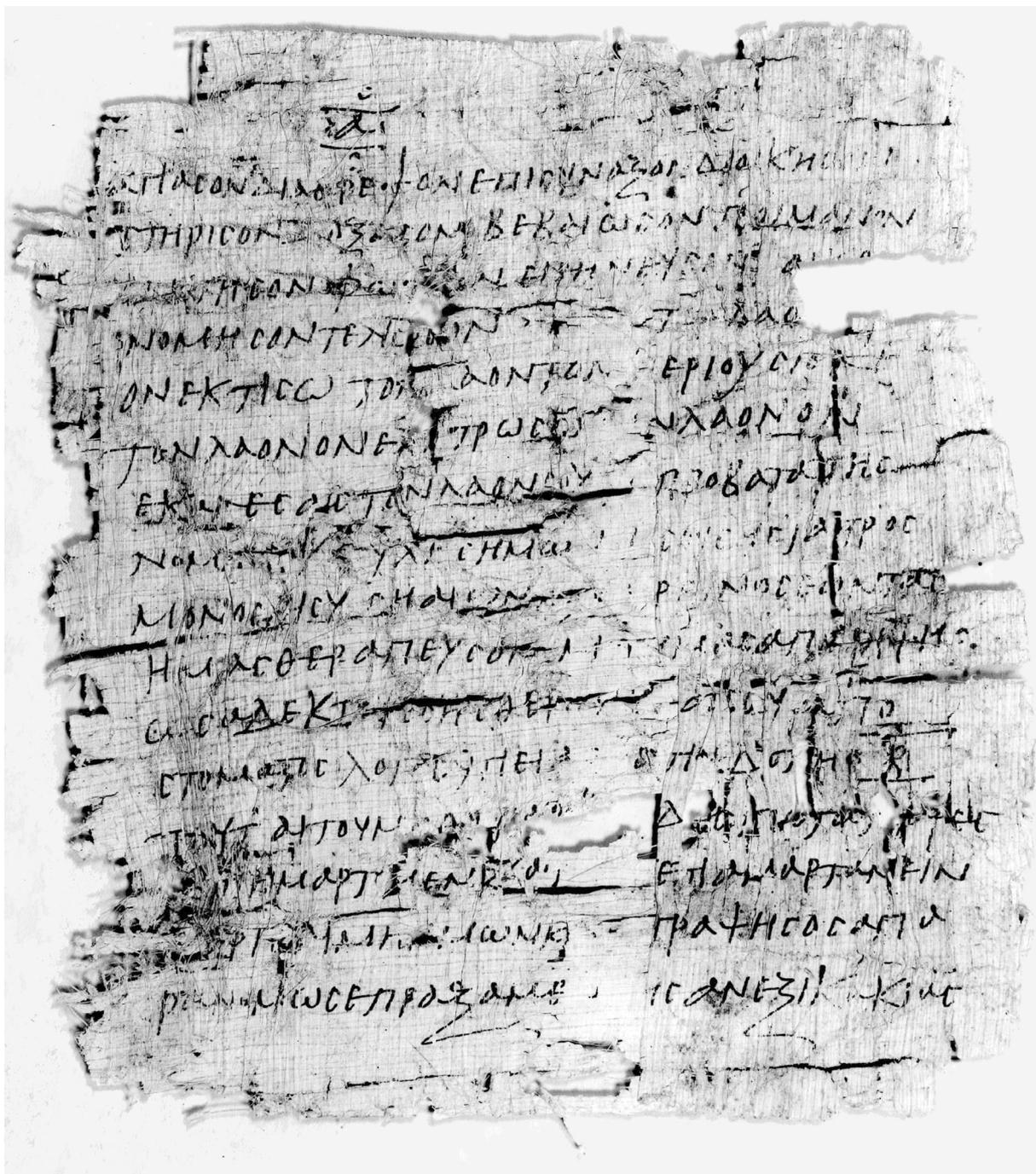
<sup>51</sup> That God is far removed from any evil is a commonplace in the Hellenistic and Roman period among Greeks, Jews and Christians.

<sup>52</sup> Note that in almost all versions of the Amidah the 17th benediction (*Avodah*) begins with "Accept . . .".

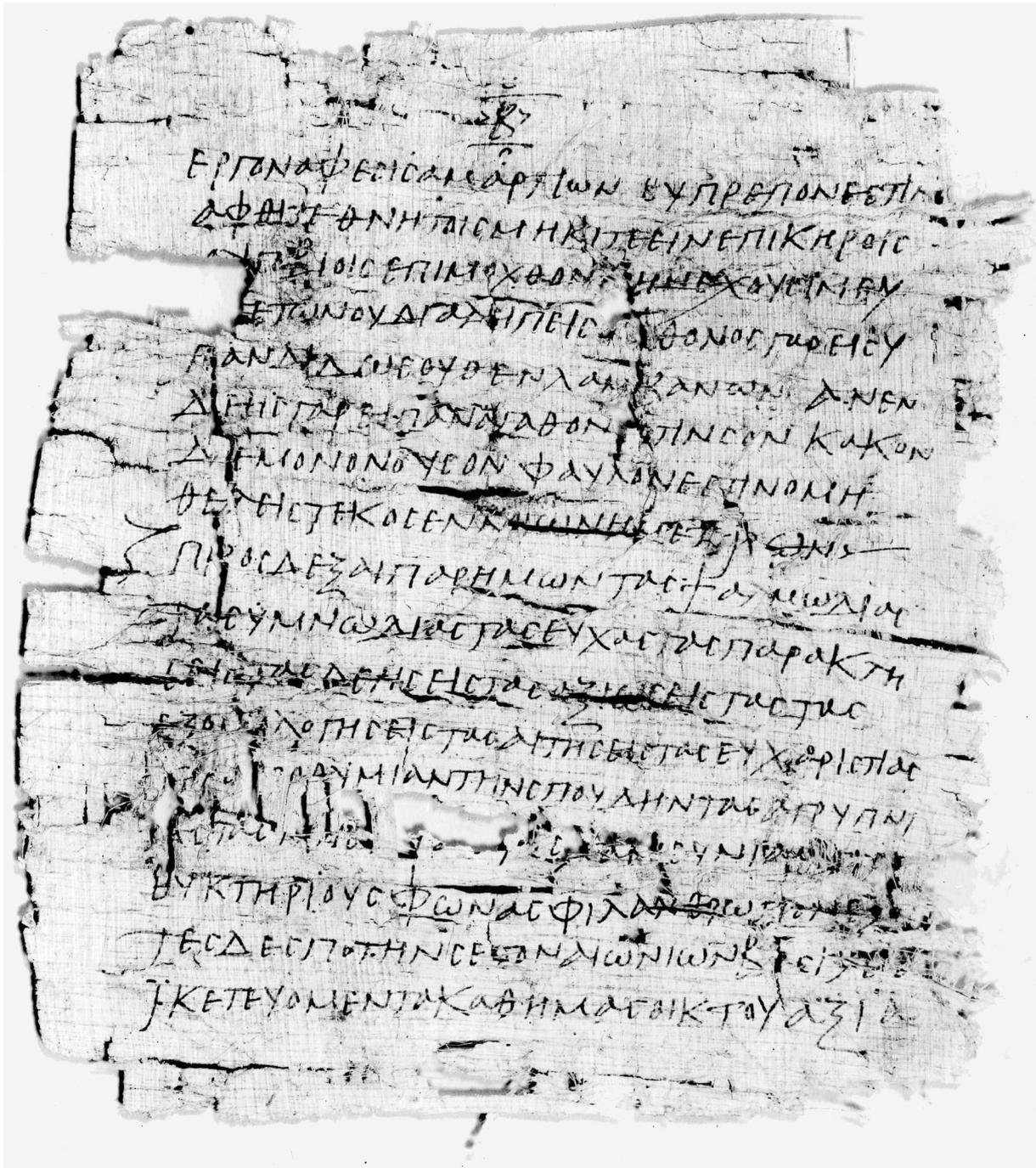
<sup>53</sup> 'Fasts' is a conjecture that was apparently made by Wahrhaftig (see JTS 40 [1939] 377 n.4) and that formed part of the basis for his contention that we have here the Amidah for Yom Kippur. If only the vigils are left, this basis is very weak since Yom Kippur apparently was not the only occasion for vigils. See Philo, *De vita contemplativa* 83, for vigils held by the Therapeutae (in Egypt!).

<sup>54</sup> The combination of vigils, fasts and lying on the ground is also to be found in Athanasius' *Vita Antonii* IV 1: . . . ἀγρυπνοῦντι . . . ἐν νηστείαις καὶ χαμευνίαις. This parallel does not constitute proof in any way that the prayer is Christian!

<sup>55</sup> One has to read here either τὸν αἰώνιον βασιλέα (Eternal King) or τῶν αἰώνων βασιλέα (King of the Ages), the latter of course being strikingly similar to, if not identical with, *melekh ha-'olam(im)*, a very common form of address in Jewish prayers.



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