1. Jacob, who is speaking to you, am also Israel,* an angel of God,* and a ruling spirit.* Abraham and Isaac were created before any work.* But, I, Jacob, who men call Jacob but whose name is Israel,* am he who God called Israel which means, a man seeing God,* because I am the firstborn of every living thing to whom God gives life.*

4. And when I was coming up from Syria Mesopotamia,* Uriel, the angel of God,* came forth and said that I [Jacob-Israel] had descended to earth and I had tabernacled among men, and that I had been called by the name of Jacob.* He envied me and fought with me and wrestled with me,* saying that his name and the name that is before every angel was to be above mine.* I told him his name and what rank he held among the sons of God.* * Are you not Uriel, the eighth after me?* and I, Israel, the archangel of the power of the Lord and the chief captain among the sons of God?* * Am I not Israel, the first minister before the face of God?* And I called upon my God by the inextinguishable name.*

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PRAYER OF JACOB

(FIRST TO FOURTH CENTURY A.D.)

A NEW TRANSLATION AND INTRODUCTION

BY J. H. CHARLESWORTH

The Prayer of Jacob contains eight internal divisions, consisting of four invocations, three petitions, and one injunction. The first invocation (vss. 1f.) begins by summoning the Father of the Patriarchs who is defined as the Creator; the second (vss. 3–5) moves in a partly chiastic form to the first from a) Father of the Patriarchs; b) Father of all things; c) Father of the powers of the cosmos; d) Creator of all; through the invocation to e) Father of powers altogether; f) Father of the whole cosmos; g) Father of all creation; h) He who showed favor to Abraham. The third invocation (vss. 6–9) summons God as the King who sits "upon (the) mountain of holiness," the sea, the serpent gods, and the sun. The last invocation (vss. 10f.) clarifies a concept found in each preceding invocation, "power": God is the one who gives "power" to others. The first petition (vss. 12) merely asks God to hear the prayer. The second petition (vss. 13f.) is the most Jewish section of the prayer; the one addressed is the "Lord God of the Hebrews," and the petitioner is one "from" the race of Israel"; the author asks God to make him straight. The third petition (vss. 15–19) mentions the secret name of God and emphasizes his cosmic nature; the request now is specific and laudable, it is for wisdom (as with Solomon, cf. 1Kgs 3) by one who seems to be "an earthly angel." The injunction (vss. 20) concludes the prayer. Unfortunately the Prayer of Jacob is virtually unknown to scholars (while the Psalms is included in IDB, vol. 2, p. 979, and discussed in Denis, Introduction [especially pp. 125–27]), the Psalms is not even noted in these major reference works.

TEXTS

The Prayer of Jacob is extant in a fourth-century papyrus now supposedly preserved in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek in Berlin. The present translation is based on the edition by K. Preissendanz.

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE, DATE, AND PROVENANCE

There is no reason to doubt that Greek is the original language. The time of composition must antedate the fourth century, the date of the papyrus. Parallels with second-century documents (see below) indicate that the prayer may be as early as the second century A.D.; if the Prayer of Joseph dates from the first century (as J. Z. Smith states in his contribution above) then the Prayer of Jacob may also be that early. Since the papyrus was acquired in Cairo, venerates Sinai, and shares ideas with many other Egyptian documents and papyri, it is reasonable to assume an Egyptian provenance.