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 d) Father of powers altogether; c) Father of the whole cosmos; b) Father of all creation; a) He who showed favor to Abraham. The third invocation (vss. 6–9) summons God as the King who sits "upon (the) mountain of holy Sinaios," 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 (vs. 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]m 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 (vs. 20) concludes the prayer. Unfortunately the Prayer of Jacob is virtually unknown to scholars (while the PrJos is included in IDB, vol. 2, p. 979, and discussed in Denis, Introduction [especially pp. 125–27], the PrJac 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. Preisendanz.¹

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.

¹K. L. Preisendanz, ed., Papyri Graecae Magicae, Die griechischen Zauberpapyri, (Leipzig, Berlin, 1931) vol. 2, pp. 148f. Other apocryphal prayers attributed to Jacob are found in PRE 37 (ed. Friedlander, p. 281) and in the Eth. text titled "La Langue de Jacob" (see D. Lifschitz, Textes éthiopiens magico-religieux [Université de Paris, Travaux et mémoires de l’Institut d’Ethnologie 38; Paris, 1940] pp. 239–43). I wish to express appreciations to H. D. Betz and P. Pokorny, who helped me improve this contribution.
Theological importance

The prayer appears Jewish, as demonstrated by verse 14, viz. the identification of the author as one "[fro]m the rac[e] of Israel." If the author was a Jewish magician, he did not fully understand the Jewish traditions (see vs. 13 and n. k2). The concept of God is interesting, stressing both his covenant relation with Israel in verses 1, 5, 8, 13, and 14 and his cosmic powers, especially as the Creator (viz. vss. 2, 4). Two unique features are the apparent belief that "[S]inaios" is a personal name in verse 8 (see Ex 19:11, 18f.; 24:16) and the concept that the composer is like "an ear[th]ly angel" and has "become immortal" (see n. i2).

E. R. Goodenough claimed that the Prayer of Jacob "is a prayer for transfiguration." He correctly saw that the prayer "is hardly a charm" (p. 203), but then claimed that the "person who uses the charm thereby becomes 'an angel upon earth,' becomes 'immortal,' and receives the 'gift'" (p. 203). But the prayer does not describe how or when the one who recites the prayer became an "angel"—perhaps he was imbued with this state as a gift (vs. 19) from saying prayers or incantations repeatedly (see vs. 20). It is possible that the author claims to be immortal like Jacob—who is "an angel of God" according to the Prayer of Joseph—and, hence, prays this prayer because he is "immortal." The prayer, therefore, seems to be, as J. Z. Smith says above, an "expression of this salvation on the part of the individual believer."

M. Simon, who was followed by Goodenough, claimed that Jewish magic has three main characteristics: great respect for Hebrew, which is usually not understood but considered to be endowed with magical powers; a feeling for the efficacious power of the name; and a preoccupation with angels. Only two of these features characterize the Prayer of Jacob. In verse 9, for example, there is a string of Hebrew names that probably were not clearly comprehended: "God, Abaôth, Abrathiaôth, [Sa]baôth, A]dônai . . ." This one verse illustrates the first two features: misunderstood Hebrew and a sense of the power of the name. A good example of at least the second of these features is verse 15: "He who has the secret name Sabaôth . . . God of gods; amen, amen." The third characteristic is not typical of the Prayer of Jacob; this prayer holds the idea that the "Lord God of the Hebrews" is the one who answers prayers (vss. 13f.), addresses petitions directly to him (vss. 17–19), and twice celebrates him as the "Creator" or "God of the angels and archangels" (vss. 2, 7). The author is preoccupied with God, not angels. These concepts are as close to Jewish traditions preserved in the Old Testament and early Jewish literature as they are far from the ideas typical of the magical charms, such as the very long Coptic prayer, which seems to be a prayer to Gabriel, the Angel of Righteousness, which states that Arnael presides over the hearing of prayers (II), and which repeatedly calls to Gabriel to "hearken unto me" and "come to me" in order to be "for me, Administrator and help . . ." (V, cf. XII, XVIII, XX). In contrast to the Prayer of Jacob, this charm contains the idea that the angels can be forced through magical incantations to come to man in order to protect and serve him. Religion and magic, as the above excerpts tend to demonstrate, are not essentially opposites, but there is a fundamental difference between them; as M. P. Nilsson argued, the contrast seems to be that religion attempts to obtain (or receive) results through willful benevolence and grace, while magic seeks to obtain them through coercion.

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Relation to other books

The prayer is similar to other Greek-Egyptian magical papyri, as one would expect from the pervasive emphasis on God’s power and on him as the source of all power (see especially vs. 11). The fourth- or fifth-century papyrus that precedes this prayer in Preisendanz’s second volume of *Papyri Graecae Magicae (= PGM*) also mentions Iao and Sabaoth and adds the names “Michael” and “Gabriel.” The Jewish amulet, Cairo 10434 (*PGM* XXV.c), likewise comes from Cairo and mentions the name “Zabaoth”; it is very brief, consisting only of the following proclamation: “Holy (is) the Lord Zabaoth (hagios kurios Zabaot).” There are numerous other parallels with the Jewish magical papyri, such as the Diadem of Moses (*PGM* VII, vol. 2, p. 28) and the so-called Eighth Book of Moses (*PGM* XIII, vol. 2, pp. 86–131).

The concept of the power of God’s name in the Jewish magical papyri is different from the biblical view (viz. Ex 3:13–15, Acts 4:9f.). In the Bible and in almost all Jewish apocryphal writings—notably in 1 Enoch 69:14, Jubilees 36:7, Prayer of Manasseh, and Artapanus—God’s name is considered known, holy, revered, and often ineffable (see Josephus, *Ant* 2.275; Jerome, *Psalm* VIII). The name was powerful because God was behind it.

In the magical papyri the divine name is considered secret and itself full of efficacious powers. In the biblical and apocryphal writings, the ruling idea is that by calling God’s name he would answer; but the pseudepigrapha do contain the tradition that God’s name is unknown to men: “And I praised the One who is not named and is unique, who dwells in the heavens, whose name is unknown to all flesh . . .” (Ascenls 7:37, cf. 1:7, 8:7). In the magical papyri the name was the essential part of a formula by which the individual could manipulate the gods and powers to grant immediately the expressed wish. Totally unbiblical is the individual’s commands to God or the gods, and the orders to supply the request “at once” (see e.g. *PGM* XVIII.b, vol. 2, p. 141, ll. 6f. “ĕdĕ ŏđĕ, tachu, tachu”).

The parallels with gnostic documents are very impressive (see the nn. to the translation). Most significant are the parallels with On the Origin of the World (II, 5) at 101, in which the androgynous beings are celebrated, notably Yaldabaoth, whose son is “called ‘Yao,’ his feminine name is ‘lordship.’ Sabaoth’s feminine name is ‘divinity.’ *Adonaios*’ feminine name is ‘kingship.’” In this excerpt and in the Prayer of Jacob are the names “Yao” (II, 5) or “Iao” (*PrJac*), “Sabaoth” (identical in both), “Adonaios” (II, 5), or “[A]donai” (*PrJac*). The relationship does not appear direct in either direction; and both seem to be independently influenced by Jewish traditions.

Noteworthy is another interesting parallel between the Prayer of Jacob and a Jewish magical prayer preserved in a fifth-century papyrus (*PGM* XXXV, vol. 2, p. 161, ll. 8f.), which contains the following: “I call upon you, he who sits upon the snow, Telze; I call upon you, Edanôth, who (is) upon the sea; I call upon you, Saecechel, who (is) upon the serpents.” This prayer is clearly Jewish; it refers to “the god of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob” (l. 14). Somewhat similarly to many pseudepigrapha, it refers to six heavens and names the angels who rule over each of them (II. 3–7). The Prayer of Jacob shares with this anonymous prayer the repeated invocations, the concept of a deity sitting upon the serpents (see v. 8), and the reference to snow (v. 16).

The Prayer of Jacob should neither be branded gnostic nor be categorized as another
magical charm. It is markedly different than either of these genres. There is nothing peculiarly gnostic about it. It is not a charm; and it is impressively different from the manipulative words and commands addressed to God (or gods; cf. PGM XXXV, vol. 2, p. 162, ll. 26f.: "Quick, quick, for I adjure (by oath) you, laō, Sabaoth . . .") and the shallow theology and request for beauty, riches, and honor typical of some charms (see PGM XXII.a, vol. 2, pp. 147f., ll. 15–26).

The Prayer of Jacob contains a request for wisdom and a heart filled with good things. And, as stated above, it addresses to God himself the petition for these gifts. This plea is reminiscent of Solomon's request (see 1Kgs 3). Noticeably absent, however, is the concept of contrition and plea for forgiveness that is the main characteristic of the Prayer of Manasseh.

The Prayer of Jacob should be added to the documents in the Pseudepigrapha. It is Jewish, pseudepigraphical, related to the traditions in the Prayer of Joseph and other pseudepigrapha, and probably dates from the same historical period as the later pseudepigrapha. Its inclusion herein also informs the reader of the significant ideas and perspectives found in many of the Jewish magical texts, such as the possibly third-century document titled "The Apocryphal Book of Moses, (Which) Concerns the Great Name." The inclusion of the Prayer of Jacob draws attention to the many unexplored areas of similarity among the pseudepigrapha, gnostic documents, and Jewish magical texts.

The concept in verse 16, that God is upon the stars, brings forth snow, and passes through the stars and planets, recalls similarities in apocalyptic documents, especially 1 and 2 Enoch. The idea in the same verse that God makes the heavenly bodies "run in every way" by his creating power is reminiscent of Ode of Solomon 16:13 ("And created things run according to their courses"), Ecclesiasticus 16:26–28, 2 Baruch 48:9, 1 Enoch 2:1, 5:2, and Psalm of Solomon 18:12–14.

The concept of being like an angel on earth and possessing immortality in verse 19 is reminiscent of some passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Odes of Solomon, and when it is linked with the mention of Jacob (see vs. 20) there are noteworthy parallels with other writings, especially the Prayer of Joseph: "I, Jacob, who is speaking to you, am also Israel, an angel of God, and a ruling spirit." 14

Introduction to translation

In the following translation of the Prayer of Jacob, I have aimed at an idiomatic translation; when necessary a literal sense or alternate interpretation is provided in the notes. My attempts to obtain a photograph of the papyrus have not been successful; I have been dependent on Preisendanz’s observations, suggested readings, and restorations. Unfortunately these have been confusing in some places. I do not note below when letters are not clear to him, and have not translated his tiny, insignificant Greek words. I also do not follow the divisions in the papyrus; to do so would have reduced the attractiveness of an idiomatic translation. As elsewhere, parentheses denote words added for good English sense; brackets circumscribe restorations.

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11 The Qumran community considered itself to be an antechamber of heaven and that the elect (the Essenes) formed with the angels one lot (cf. 1QH 6.13; cf. 1QH 3.21f., 4.24f.).

12 See my contribution on the OdesSol herein; note especially Ode 3:7f.: "I have been united (to him) . . . he who is joined to him who is immortal, truly will be immortal."

13 Although A. Böhlig does not mention the PrJac, he does draw attention to numerous parallels to the concept of Jacob as an angel, as in PrJos, in gnostic and Manichean documents; cf. his "Jahak als Engel in Gnostizismus und Manichaismus," Erkenntnisse und Meinungen, ed. G. Wiessner (Göttinger Orientforschungen 17; Wiesbaden, 1978) pp. 1–14. Also see T. Schneider, "Der Engel Jakob bei Mani," ZNW 33 (1934) 218f.; the contribution above on PrJos by J. Z. Smith; and the magical texts published by Leemans, Papyri Graeci, vol. 2 (especially V.8.16; 9.7; W.18.23; 22.28).

14 Goodenough earlier presented a "free" translation (Jewish Symbols, vol. 2, p. 203). I have noted the places in which our translations differ.
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Charlesworth, *PMR*, p. 139.

**PRAYER OF JACOB**


**JEWISH MAGIC**


Eitrem, S. *Orakel und Mysterien am Ausgang der Antike*. Albae vigilae 5; Zürich, 1947.


PRAYER OF JACOB*  

(1)  
Father of (the) Patriarchs,  
Father of all (things), b  
[Father] of (the) powers of the cosmos;  

2  
Cr[e]ato[r of all][1 ... ],  
Creator of the angels and archangel[s],  
the C[r]eator of (the) re[deeming] nam[es]; c  

3  
I invoke you,  

4  
O Father of powers altogether,  
Father of the [whole] cosmos  
[and of] all creation, b both the inhabited and uninhabited,  
to whom the cherubim are subject;  
Gen 15:18  

5  
He who showed favor to Abram  
by giving the kingdom to him.  

6  
He[a]r me,  

7  
(You) the God of the powers,  
the God of angels and archangels,  
king . . . ];  

(10)  
|| You who sit upon (the) mountain of holy Sinai; . . .  

a. The title is restored from the last line of the Gk.  
b. Or "(the) universe." See Lampe, p. 950.  
The concept of God as Father, the Creator—an  
association not typical of the OT in which Father  
is linked with personal care (cf. G. Schrenk, TDTN,  
vol. 5, pp. 978–82)—is an emphasis by Plato  
(poietes kai patér to pantes, Timaeus 28C) that  
is inherited and used frequently by Justin (cf.  
E. F. Osborn, "The God and Father of All," Justin  
Martyr [Beiträge zur historischen Theologie 47;  
Tübingen, 1973; pp. 17–27]).  

c. The concept is in biblical and apocryphal  
literature but not in the magical papyri.  
d. Gk: [kai tēs] hōlds geneseōs. The Gk. geneseōs  
can mean "beginning, production, creation,  
race, age." Goodenough (Jewish Symbols, vol. 2,  
p. 203) rendered the phrase freely; "and of every  
thing which has come into being."  

e. Gk: [hup]es[a][men][i] hoi] can mean  
"those shrinking before, ... those holding in awe;,"  
but LSJM (p. 1895) shows that the verb also means  
"to be subject to." Goodenough (Jewish Symbols,  
vol. 2, p. 203) translated the phrase similarly:  
"to whom the cherubim are subject."  

f. The Gk. charizō, "to show favor to," is used  
in a similar fashion in ApEzra 1:13: "Lord, what  
favor will you show the righteous (kurié, tous  
dikaiou it charizēs)?" See K. Tischendorf, Apoc-

    alypse Apocryphae (Leipzig, 1866; repr. Hilde-
    sheim, 1966) p. 25.  
g. It is impossible to discern how much text is  
lost. Between the lacunae are portions of voces  
magicae (magical incantations).  

h. Cf. the translation of ho poiesas in WisSol  
9:1 and the discussion of this Gk. form in E.  
Norden, Agnostos Theos: Untersuchungen zur For-
mengeschichte Religioser Rede (Leipzig, Berlin,  
i. This statement is significant, because Jews  
usually depicted Jerusalem, not Sinai, as the axis  
mundi. Jub 8:19 refers to three holy places: the  
Garden of Eden, Mount Sinai, and Mount Zion  
(see Jub 1:2, 28). Ezek 38:12 calls Jerusalem "the  
navel of the earth." 1En 26:1 portrays Jerusalem  
as both the middle of the earth and the "holy  
mountain" (see also LetAris 83). For a recent  
discussion of the identification of Jerusalem with  
a "world mountain" and the "navel of the world,"  
see B. S. Childs, Myth and Reality in the Old  
and S. Terrien, "The Omphalos Myth and Hebrew  
Religion" (VT 29 [1979] 317–38). For a severe  
critique of Childs and Terrien, see S. Talmon,  
"The 'Navel of the Earth' and the Comparative  
Method" (in Scripture in History & Theology:  
Essays in Honor of J. Coert Rylaarsdam, eds.  
A. L. Merrill and T. W. Overholt; Pittsburgh, 1977;
I summon you.

Abaelth, Abralthiaeth, & [Sa]ba[oth, A]dônai, 'astra'... the Lord of all (things).


I summon you.
The underworld is denoted by *chas[mas]tos* (cf. e.g. Lk 16:26). In *PGM* IV.2536 (vol. 2, p. 153) Tartarus is defined as *chasma phaeinon:* "the bright (or fiery) chasm." According to *PGM* XXV.3 (vol. 2, p. 160) Buthath is said to sit (or rule over) the abyss: *ho kathemenos epi tis abusou.* According to IEn 20:2 Uriel is the angel who is in charge of Tartarus. IEn 90:24-27 describes the place of destruction as the "fiery abyss." In GkApEzra 1:9 it is said that "sinners ... are for fiery Gehenna (*eis ten geennan tou puros).*"

Make straight the one who has [the] prayer [from] the race of Israel [and those] who have received favor from you, God of gods.

He who has the secret name *Sabaôth* ... God of gods; amen, amen.

[He] who is upon (the) stars above (the) ages, who brings forth snow, a and who always passes through the stars and planets, b [and makes] (them) run in every way by your creating (power). c

Fill me with wisdom. d

empow[e]r me, Lord;

Fill my heart with good things, Lord;

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u. The underworld is denoted by *chas[mas]tos* (cf. e.g. Lk 16:26). In *PGM* IV.2536 (vol. 2, p. 153) Tartarus is defined as *chasma phaeinon:* "the bright (or fiery) chasm." According to *PGM* XXV.3 (vol. 2, p. 160) Bathath is said to sit (or rule over) the abyss: *ho kathemenos epi tis abusou.* According to IEn 20:2 Uriel is the angel who is in charge of Tartarus. IEn 90:24-27 describes the place of destruction as the "fiery abyss." In GkApEzra 1:9 it is said that "sinners ... are for fiery Gehenna (*eis ten geennan tou puros).*"


x. *Epa[ga]el* appears only here in the magical papyri. Goodenough (Jewish Symbols, vol. 2, p. 203) broke his habit of not representing words in small type in Preisendanz; he included *alamn.*

y. According to Preisendanz's text, this word, *aen[au]r,* is very unclear.

z. These are two Semitic names and are found only here in the magical papyri. It is tempting to suggest the second name is Gk. for "*su el*" or "you (in Gk.) are (understood) God (the Semitic proper name)." The l. would then mean "God of God, you (are) God." The harmony with vss. 14b and 15b is attractive.

a. Gk.: *diorthodson,* from *diorthod,* which means "to make quite straight, set right, amend"; the verb has a medical or therapeutic meaning. Goodenough (Jewish Symbols, vol. 2, p. 203): "Keep straight him who has the charm." The noun is again *te[n] euchen-* which Goodenough had earlier translated as "curse" (see n. w).

b. See n. f.

c. See n. q.

d. The syntax is difficult. Another vaguely possible interpretation: "[He] who brings forth snow upon (the) ages." In 4Mac 9:8 the tyrant is told he will suffer "eternal torture by fire (*aitinion bassanon dia puros.*)"

e. Lit. "the fixed and wandering stars"; but these are technical terms.

f. Gk. *tapanta* is here taken to be an accusative of specification.

g. The Gk. is difficult. Another possible rendering is "[and make] (them) pursue everything in your creation." P. Pokorny suggested to me another possible rendering: "and who makes the stars and planets run the universe by your creating (power)."

h. A similar translation was offered by Goodenough (Jewish Symbols, vol. 2, p. 203): "and makest the fixed stars and planets marshal! all things by thy creative power." He also added the n. "This passage is difficult." See above discussion under "Relation to other books."

i. Gk.: *sophias,* see 1Kgs 3:9; cf. LXX 5:9.
AS AN EARTHLY ANGEL, as having become immortal, as having received the gift which is from you, amen, amen.

Say the prayer of Jacob seven times to (the) North and East.

The hos probably should not be taken as a demonstrative and the I. understood as a petition: "so that (I might become) an earthily angel." Three times in vs. 19 there is a hos that begins a line; the first of these may be translated either "as (you empower) an earthily angel" or "as (having become) an earthily angel." The latter possibility seems preferable, because of the two following aorists (probably dramatic aorists): having become immortal and having received the gift. The Qumran literature (viz. IQH 3.21f.; 4.24f.; 6.13; 3.22f.; IQS 11.7f.; IQSb 4.25), many pseudopigrapha (especially PrJos A, 2En 30:8–11 A, HistRech 7; cf. JosAsen 20:6, OdesSol 3:7f., TSol 22), the Cologne Mani Codex 51:1ff. (ApSethel: kai eginomén hós heis tôn megístôn aggélou), and other Jewish inspired writings (e.g. Book of Adam and Eve, ed. C. S. Malan, Bk. 1, ch. 10) demonstrate that Jews could have thought of a righteous person on earth becoming an angel and asking for wisdom and power.

Goodenough (Jewish Symbols, vol. 2, p. 203): "because I am an angel upon earth, because I have become immortal."

In vs. 5 AbrJaham is mentioned and here Jacob's name is expressed. It is noteworthy that Isaac's name never appears. One might have expected it; the Patriarchs, presumably Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (see the contribution herein on the Testaments of the Three Patriarchs), are uppermost in the mind of the author, since they are mentioned in the very first I. of vs. 1. As the name of God, so the ranks of the Patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—were assumed to possess magical powers (cf. e.g. PGM VII, II. 314f. [vol. 2, p. 14]; XIII, I. 976, especially 817 [vol. 2, p. 128]; and Simon, Verus Israel, p. 401). It is only vaguely possible (and I would think improbable; see n. 1) that lad in vs. 8 denotes Isaac even though Simon (Verus Israel, p. 407) seems to be correct in stating that the phrase ton theon tou Abraam kai tou lad kai tou lakou means "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac [sic], and of Jacob." Also see J. Z. Smith's comments above, in his contribution on PrJos, n. 9. In the opening of PrJos, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are said to predate creation (cf. Fragment A 1–3). As stated above, the magical papyri use Heb. names without understanding them or even correctly pronouncing and transliterating them.