

O.IFAO inv. 215

Fayum

III²

Cairo, Institut français d'archéologie orientale, O.IFAO inv. 215. Ed. J. Schwartz, 'Un fragment grec du livre de Judith', *Rev.Bibl.* 53 (1946) 534-537, pl. VII. VH 80; Rahlfs 999; *LDAB* 3105; K. Treu, 'Christliche Papyri 1940-1967', *APF* 19 (1969) 169-206, at 176.

Ostrakon, c. 4.9 (B) x 6.6 (H) cm at furthest extremes, originally c. 11 (B) x 11 (H) cm. Broken at top, bottom and left, where c. two-thirds of the width has been lost. At the right the original edge survives in l.14 and probably also in 15; elsewhere broken. Part of a purchase from the Fayum dating to the latter part of III (with which the present piece may not have been originally connected). Front: 18 lines; probably originally 20, with one line lost at top and bottom. Literary informal round hand with some letters written cursively, dated by ed.pr. to III², comparing P.Ryl. 2.114 (P.Sakaon 36) (c. 280; P.Ryl. 2, pl. 19); 'Fin du III^e siècle', VH. *Nomina sacra*: Ἰσραήλ (6, 8), Ἱεροσαλήμ (12) uncontracted. Back: blank.

[Καὶ ὡς ἤκουσαν οἱ ἐν τοῖς σκηνώμασιν ὄντες ἐξέστησαν ἐπὶ τὸ]
 [γεγονός καὶ ἐπέπεσαν ἐπ' αὐτοὺς φ]όβ[ος καὶ τρόμος καὶ οὐκ ἦν]
 [ἄνθρωπος μένων κατὰ πρόσωπον τοῦ] πλησί[ον ἔτι ἀλλ' ἐκχυθέν-]
 [τες ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἔφευγον ἐπὶ πᾶσα]ν ὁδὸν τοῦ πε[δίου καὶ τῆς]
 5 [ὄρεινῆς καὶ οἱ παρεμβεβληκότες ἐν τῇ ὄρει]νῇ κύκλω Βατυλ[ούα καὶ]
 [ἐτράπησαν εἰς φυγὴν καὶ τότε οἱ υἱ]οὶ Ἰσραήλ πᾶς ἀνὴρ πο[λε-]
 [μιστῆς ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐξεχύθησαν ἐπ' αὐτοὺς κ]αὶ ἀπέστειλεν Ὁζίας [εἰς]
 [Βαιτομασθαίμ καὶ Χωθαῖ καὶ Χωλὰ καὶ ε]ἰς πᾶν ὄριον Ἰσραήλ τ[οὺς]
 [ἀπαγγέλλοντας ὑπὲρ τῶν συντετελεσ]μένων καὶ ἵνα πάντ[ες ἐπ-]
 10 [εκχυθῶσι τοῖς πολεμίοις εἰς τὴν ἀναίρεσι]ν αὐτῶν ὡς δὲ ἤκουσαν [οἱ]
 [υἱοὶ Ἰσραήλ πάντες ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἐπ]έπεσον ἐπ' αὐτοὺς καὶ ἔ[κοπ-]
 [τον αὐτοὺς ἕως Χωβὰ ὡσαύτως δὲ καὶ ο]ἱ ἐξ Ἱεροσαλήμ παρεγενή[θη-]
 [σαν καὶ ἐκ πάσης τῆς ὄρεινῆς ἀνήγγει]λαν γὰρ αὐτοῖς τὰ γεγονό-
 [τα τῇ παρεμβολῇ τῶν ἐχθρῶν αὐτῶν κ]αὶ οἱ ἐν Γαλαὰδ καὶ οἱ ἐν
 15 [τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ ὑπερεκέρασαν αὐτοὺς πληγῇ] μεγάλη ἕως οὗ παρῆλθον
 [Δαμασκὸν καὶ τὰ ὅρια αὐτῆς οἱ δὲ λοιπαὶ οἱ κατο]ικοῦντες Βατυλούα ἐπ[έ-]
 [πεσαν τῇ παρεμβολῇ Ἀσσοῦρ, καὶ ἐπρονόμεισαν αὐ]τοὺς καὶ ἐπλού[τη-]
 [σαν σφόδρα οἱ δὲ υἱοὶ Ἰσραήλ ἀναστρέψαντες ἀπὸ τῆς κοπῆ]ς ἐκυρίε[υσαν]
 [τῶν λοιπῶν, καὶ αἱ κῶμαι καὶ ἐπαύλεις ἐν τῇ ὄρεινῇ καὶ πεδι]νῇ ἐκ[ράτη-]
 20 [σαν πολλῶν λαφύρων, ἧ γὰρ πληθὺς πολὺ σφόδρα.]

Although frequently cited by patristic writers (Bogaert, 254), many questioned its canonicity (Moore, 1124), and this ostrakon preserves the only papyrological testimony of the text of Judith from Egypt in the period prior to Constantine (and, excluding the great uncial MSS, from any period). The ostrakon could not have held much more text than is preserved, and the competency of the hand indicates it was not a writing exercise. The choice of text was clearly deliberate, but a motivation for its selection is not obvious. Among patristic writers can be detected use of the story as a model for the persecuted (see Stocker, esp. 3-10). Schwartz (537) suggested that this ostrakon, with its theme of unexpected reversal, might be placed in a post-persecution context, either a Christian community after Decius, or a Jewish one after the time of Trajan.

A decision between a Jewish and Christian context is not possible with certainty (both Treu, 143, and Roberts, *MSB*, 78, leave the question open): *nomina sacra* are not contracted, but the name of God does not occur, and Ἰσραήλ and Ἱεροσαλήμ are frequently uncontracted in Christian texts. The reading Βατυλούα at l. 16 suggested to Schwartz that this text might represent an 'édition juive', preferred within Jewish communities, but he admitted that this could not be proven.

P.-M. Bogaert, 'Judith', *RAC* Lief. 147 (1998) 245-58; C.A. Moore, 'Judith', *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (1992) vol. 3, 1118-1125; M. Stocker, *Judith. Sexual Warrior. Women and Power in Western Culture* (New Haven and London 1998); K. Treu, 'Die Bedeutung des Griechischen für die Juden im römischen Reich', *Kairos* N.F., 15 (1973) 123-44.