

BRINGING TOGETHER THE FAMILY  
FOR A DAUGHTER'S WEDDING:  
*P.YALE* 1.78 RECONSIDERED<sup>1</sup>

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*Abstract.* — In this article we suggest a new interpretation of the private letter first published as *P.Yale* 1.78. Improved readings of ll. 1-2 and 6-9 and the address on the *verso* provide a more coherent grammatical structure and allow a better understanding of the events described in this letter.

*Introduction*

The private letter *P.Yale* 1.78 (Arsinoite nome; first half of the second century CE) from Isidoros to Chenanoubis received a short edition in *P.Yale* 1 (1967) and has not attracted attention since its publication.<sup>2</sup> Yet the contents of this short example of private correspondence remain somewhat obscure as a juxtaposition of the text and translation according to the *editio princeps* shows:

Ἰ[σίδ]ωρος Χεναγοῦβ[ι]  
πλεῖστα χαίρειν.  
[π]ρ[ὸ π]άντων εὐχομαί σε ὑγι-  
α[ί]ν[ει]ν. ἰδοῦ, πόλλα ἐνετεει-  
5 [λάμε]θα τῷ πατρί μου περὶ σοῦ  
[ἴν' εἰ]ς σὲ ἐνέγκη μετ' αὐτοῦ  
εἰς τοὺς γάμους τῆς θυγατρὸς  
σ[ο]ῦ ἐπανενέγκων ὁ μέλ-

<sup>1</sup> P.CtYBR inv. 169. We would like to thank The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library for undertaking the restoration of the papyrus to facilitate our research and for sending us an image to work with. Our research was funded by The Research Council of Norway (NFR) and the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO).

<sup>2</sup> C. Préaux, "Review of *P.Yale* I," *Chronique d'Égypte* 43 (1968) 404, accepts the interpretation of the *editio princeps* that the letter deals with the bringing of presents to the wedding of the daughter of the recipient.

[λο]με(ν) αὐτῇ ἐγδοῦναι. ὄρα,  
 10 [μὴ οὔν] ἄλλως ποιήσης καὶ  
 λυπήσης ἡμᾶς.

*Verso*: ἀπόδος Χενανουῦβι ἀπὸ Ἰσιδώρου

“Isidoras [sic] to Chenanoubis best greetings. Before all I pray you are well. Look, we gave instruction to my father about you so that he might bring them to you with him to your daughter’s wedding, bringing what we intend to give her. See that you do not, therefore, do otherwise and cause us grief. *Verso*: Deliver to Chenanoubis from Isidoros.”

The Greek text and translation cited above raise some questions related to the contents of this letter. Who/What is the referent of the translated “them” in the text in “he might bring them to you” in l. 6? The only possible object of bringing in the text printed above is provided by the relative clause in the neuter singular, “what we intend to give her” in ll. 8-9, but – as also the editors saw it – this does not need to be the object of the first verb for bringing (ἐνέγκη, l. 6). The entire final clause of ll. 6-9 sounds repetitive and not entirely coherent (“bring them to you with him” – “bringing what we intend to give her”). If the father is the agent of bringing someone or something while the recipient of the letter, Chenanoubis, has no active part, why is she asked not to do otherwise in the final sentence (ll. 10-11)? The formulation makes the letter “end in a peremptory note *slightly out of character with the tone of the earlier part*” – to quote the editors’ remark of unease (with our emphasis).

#### *A New Interpretation*

There are several grammatical inconsistencies in this part of the text (ll. 6-9):

[ἴν’ εἰ]ς σὲ ἐνέγκη μετ’ αὐτοῦ  
 εἰς τοὺς γάμους τῆς θυγατρὸς  
 σ[ο]υ ἐπανενέγκων ὁ μέλ-  
 [λο]με(ν) αὐτῇ ἐγδοῦναι

While the object of the first verb of bringing (ἐνέγκη, l. 6) seems to be missing, the direction of movement is indicated twice: [εἰ]ς σὲ and εἰς τοὺς γάμους “to you, to your daughter’s wedding” (ll. 6 and 7). While this may be physically possible in a situation in which the wedding is

celebrated at the same location where the recipient was residing, the construction is grammatically problematic. The preposition εἰς with the accusative case is commonly used to express an inanimate (i.e. non-human) goal of movement in Greek.<sup>3</sup> When the endpoint of motion or transfer is a human being, such as the personal pronoun σέ, “you,” the dative case or the preposition πρὸς is preferred.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the expected construction of bringing something or someone “to you” would be a dative pronoun σοι (with an animate or inanimate object) or πρὸς σέ (with animate objects only). Nevertheless, the editors supplement the preposition [εἰ]ς before the personal pronoun σέ in l. 6. Because the reading of the accusative pronoun σέ is certain and the verb lacks an object, we would suggest the following interpretation of this phrase: “so that he will bring *you* with him to the wedding of your daughter.”

Removing the preposition εἰς, would leave a space of two or three letters after the conjunction ἵνα in l. 6. This could be filled with a short adverb or particle, such as καί or οὐν, but the remains of the letter which peer out from the break are not compatible with either of these words. Another possibility would be to reject ἵνα altogether and supplement ὅπως. Both ἵνα and ὅπως with subjunctive (ἐνέγκῃ, l. 6) are used for final complementation after verbs of ordering (ἐνετεῖ|λάμε]θα, ll. 4-5) in the papyri.<sup>5</sup> While ἵνα may be the more colloquial form and perhaps the one expected in a short private letter, ὅπως is still commonly used in the second century CE and should not be ruled out.<sup>6</sup> The final sigma visible at the end of the lacuna fits well with the reading of [ὄπ]ως.

In the *editio princeps* the second part of the final clause ἐπανενέγκων ὃ μέλλ[λο]με(ν) αὐτῇ ἐγδοῦναι (ll. 8-9) seems to repeat a verb of bringing, this time in a participle clause referring to a present they intend to give to the bride. However, in contrast to the use of φέρω in l. 6, the composite verb ἐπαναφέρω does not mean “bring” but “bring back,” “throw back (upon),” “refer back” (see LSJ s.v.). Since the reading of

<sup>3</sup> E. Mayser, *Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit* 2.2 (Berlin-Leipzig 1934) 408.

<sup>4</sup> J.V. Stolk, “Dative Alternation and Dative Case Syncretism in Greek: The Use of Dative, Accusative and Prepositional Phrases in Documentary Papyri,” *Transactions of the Philological Society* 115 (2017) 212-238.

<sup>5</sup> K. Bentein, “Minor Complementation Patterns in Post-Classical Greek (I-VI AD): A Socio-Historical Analysis of a Corpus of Documentary Papyri,” *Symbolae Osloenses* 89 (2015) 115-120.

<sup>6</sup> Compare the use of ὅπως in the short note by Gaius to the camel-driver Horion about a missing delivery in *P.Princ.* 3.163.5-6 (second century CE): εἰ δὲ μὴ ἐντελήσῃ (sigm. aor. subj. ending attached to the future stem) τῷ καμηλείτῃ (l. καμηλίτη) σου ὅπως ἰδοῖ (l. δῶ) μοι ἢ τὴν τιμὴν ἢ σιτάρια αὐτῶν, “but if not, you will instruct the camel-driver either to give me the value or their grain.”

ἐπανενέγκων is not very convincing either, we would like to suggest a different interpretation for this problematic passage. Lines 8-9 may be restored as ἐπεὶ ἄνευ ὑμῶν ο<ὐ> μέλλ[λο]μεν αὐτή<ν> ἐγδοῦναι. The right part of the letter following the first ε in l. 8 has been broken off; the slightly sloping connecting middle stroke is found in both ν and π as drawn by this hand (compare, e.g., the first ν in the name Chenanoubis in l. 1 with the π of πατήρ in l. 5). What follows seems to us to be a ligatured ει. The assumed υ of ὑμῶν is without parallel in the rest of the letter and different from the immediately preceding final υ of ἄνευ. However, this graphic sign does not look like an ε either, in particular when comparing its form here and in the secure ενε sequences in ll. 4 (ἐνετει-) and 6 (ἐνέγκη). After this letter the scribe began to draw a letter (an η thinking of ἡμῶν or a ν thinking ahead to the end of the word?) which he then corrected to μ.

For this new reading, we need to assume an omission of the υ in οὐ, as the interpretation of the ο as a relative pronoun or article would make no sense without a preceding verb and immediately followed by a verb form as it is. Another omission of a final letter needs to be assumed in order to change the case form of the personal pronoun αὐτή from a nominative or dative case into an accusative. Taking the personal pronoun αὐτή<ν>, “her,” as a direct object rather than indirect object suits the meaning of the verb ἐγδοῦναι better. As already mentioned in the commentary of the *editio princeps*, the verb ἐγδοῦναι “is normally used of giving away the bride” and only rarely for giving gifts to the bride (for references see *editio princeps*, n. to l. 9).

The similarity of the forms of the ν and the π in this hand (see discussion of l. 8 above) has also consequences for the decipherment of the address on the back where we read ἀνάδος instead of ἀπόδος read in the *editio princeps*. The fully shaped second *alpha* – almost identical to the first one – confirms our reading. The form ἀπόδος is standard in the address of letters where the imperative of ἀναδίδωμι admittedly never occurs. However, the participle of ἀναδίδωμι is used with reference to the delivery of letters during the second to fourth centuries CE in private letters from the Roman period, as, e.g., in *P.Oxy.* 3.532.10-13 (second century CE): ἀναγκαιῶς οὖν τῷ | ἀναδιδούντι σοι τὸ ἐπιστόλιον τοῦτο εὐθέως | ἀπόδος, “it is necessary therefore to give this (sum) at once to the one who hands you this letter,” and *SB* 6.9439.2-4 (third century CE): Ἰέραξ ὁ ἀναδιδούσ σοι ταῦτά | μου τὰ γράμματα μισθωτῆς ἡμῶν ἐγένετο, “Hierax, the person who is handing you this letter of mine, has become a tenant of ours.” The new form largely replaces ἀποδίδωμι which is commonly used in this function during the Ptolemaic period; see, e.g., *P.Cair.Zen.* 1.59074.3-4

(before June 17, 257 BCE): εἰ δὲ μή, ἀπόδος Ἑρμῖαι τῷ ἀποδιδόντι σοι τὴν ἐπιστολήν, “if not, give (it) to Hermias, the one who hands you the letter” and *P.Mich.* 1.33.2-4 (Jan. 4, 254 BCE): Νικάνωρ ὁ τὴν ἐπιστολήν σοι ἰ ἀποδιδούς ἐστὶν ἡμῖν ἐν φιιλίαι, “Nikanor who is handing you this letter is a friend of ours.”

### *Family Relations*

It remains to explore the relationship of the correspondents and of the persons mentioned in the letter. A reference to a father in the body of a letter with a possessive pronoun but without a personal name is highly likely to be to the literal father of the sender.<sup>7</sup> This means that Isidoros is writing to Chenanoubis that she could travel with *his* father to *her* daughter's wedding. The apparent importance of the presence of both Isidoros' father and Chenanoubis (cf. the plural ἄνευ ὑμῶν in l. 8) for the wedding, suggests a close family relationship between the sender Isidoros, the recipient Chenanoubis, Isidoros' father who has been asked to bring her with him to the wedding and the bride. Thus, Chenanoubis may have been Isidoros' mother; if so, the bride would have been Isidoros' sister. Or, Chenanoubis could have been Isidoros' sister. In this case, the bride would have been his niece living with him permanently or temporarily.<sup>8</sup>

In any case, one expects a close family relationship between sender and addressee to be indicated in the heading of the letter (but not necessarily in the address on the *verso*). Based on the traces of ink (not noted in the *editio princeps*) and the available space after Χεναγοῦβ[ι and before πλεῖστα, the shorter [τῆ μη-][τ]ρὶ would be the most likely candidate.<sup>9</sup> Even though one would refer to his/her real mother in the heading of letters in this way – see, e.g., the letter of Thermouthas to what may have been her mother Valerias in *SB* 5.7572.1-2 (Philadelphieia, Oct. 5, 104? CE): Θερμουθᾶς Οὐαλεριᾶτι τῆ μητρὶ πλεῖστα χέριν – such a reference cannot

<sup>7</sup> E. Dickey, “Literal and Extended Use of Kinship Terms in Documentary Papyri,” *Mnemosyne* 57 (2004) 145-148.

<sup>8</sup> Another possibility, that Chenanoubis is Isidoros' wife, is less likely. If this were the case, one would expect Isidoros to speak of “our daughter,” not “your daughter.” But an even more complicated situation cannot be excluded altogether.

<sup>9</sup> The alternative τῆ ἰ μη[τρὶ] cannot be excluded but seems less likely. As the scribe leaves a small gap between the sender and addressee in l. 1, one might expect a similar distinction of cola in l. 2 between the addressee and the greeting. Reading τῆ ἀδελφῆ or τῆ ἀδελφῆ pushes the limits of the space available in the lacuna at the end of l. 1 or the beginning of l. 2 and does not seem to fit the traces better than μητρὶ.

always be taken literally during this period.<sup>10</sup> If it were to be taken literally in this case, this would make the family of Isidoros complete. His father will travel with his mother to the wedding of their daughter, Isidoros' sister.

In light of the above, the full private letter *P.Yale* 1.78 reads:

Ἰ[σίδ]ωρος Χενανοῦβ[ι τῆ μη-]  
 [τ]ρὶ πλεῖστα χαίρειν.  
 [π]ρ[ὸ π]άντων εὐχομαί σε ὑγι-  
 α[ί]ν[ει]ν. ἰδοῦ, πόλλα ἐνετει-  
 5 [λάμε]θα τῷ πατρί μου περὶ σοῦ  
 [ὄπ]ως σὲ ἐνέγκη μετ' αὐτοῦ  
 εἰς τοὺς γάμους τῆς θυγατρὸς  
 σ[ο]ν ἐπεὶ ἄνευ ὑ[η]μῶν ο<ὐ> μέλ-  
 [λο]μεν αὐτῆ<ν> ἐγδοῦναι. ὄρα,  
 10 [μὴ οὔν] ἄλλως ποιήσης καὶ  
 λυπήσης ἡμᾶς.

*Verso:* ἀγάδος Χενανοῦβι X ἀπὸ Ἰσιδώρου

8 ὑ[η]μῶν or ὑ[γ]μῶν 9 l. ἐκδοῦναι

“Isidoros to Chenanoubis, (his) mother, many greetings. Before all I pray you are well. Look, time and again we urged my father concerning you to bring you with him for the wedding of your daughter; for without you (pl.) we will not give her away. Take care not to do otherwise and give us sorrow. (*Verso*) Deliver to Chenanoubis from Isidoros.”

In this new reconstruction Chenanoubis is not expected to bring the gift to the bride, but her presence is wished for as a close relative, the bride's mother. Isidoros states his wish for her presence in the strongest possible terms, even resorting to the hyperbolic, certainly rhetorical, statement that there can be no wedding without her and his father.<sup>11</sup> In this light, the coda “take care not to do otherwise and give us sorrow” (ll. 9-11) fits well with the rest of the letter.

<sup>10</sup> Dickey (n. 7) 139-144.

<sup>11</sup> Another exaggerated declaration in a papyrus letter expressed in similar grammatical terms is Eudaimonis' statement in *P.Brem.* 63.25-28 (R.S. Bagnall and R. Cribiore, *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt, 300 BC-AD 800* [Ann Arbor 2006] 143-145): ἴσθι δὲ ὅτι οὐ μέλλω θεῶι σχολάζειν, εἰ μὴ πρότερον ἀπαρτίσω τὸν υἱόν μου, “Rest assured that I will not pay studious attention to God until I get my son back safe.”