**The Development of the First Benediction of the Grace after Meals in Light of the Cairo Genizah Liturgical Fragments**

### Avi Shmidman*Department of Jewish Literature, Bar-Ilan University*

Uri Ehrlich
*Department of Jewish Thought, Ben-Gurion University*

In this article, we collect and publish, for the very first time, the full corpus of Genizah fragments attesting to the text of the first benediction of the Grace after Meals, which are over 150 in number. After subdividing these texts into seven essential groups, we analyze the developmental stages represented by the text groups. We highlight the fragments that most likely represent the initial form of the benediction, and we consider the factors that motivated shifts from one formulation to another. Following our philological analysis, we present an *apparatus criticus* recording all of the textual variants within the corpus, thus providing the scholarly community with a full body of evidence for further analysis and consideration.