Cult Centralization in the Persian Period: Biblical and Historical Perspectives

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***Résumé**. Cet article s'intéresse à la centralisation régionale à l'époque perse et à la façon dont ce phénomène est pris en compte par les rédacteurs de la Bible, notamment en lien avec certaines traditions de centralisation du culte à Jérusalem. On prendra le cas du sanctuaire samarien sur le mont Garizim et l'on soulèvera les questions suivantes : (1) Le mont Garizim était-il l'un des sanctuaires inférieurs de Yahu/YHWH, ou était-il comparable au Second temple à Jérusalem ? (2) Comment ce sanctuaire était-il perçu après l'exil, puisque deux sanctuaires yahwistes coexistaient à moins de 65 km l'un de l'autre ?*

Regional centralization contra cult centralization? A critical survey of the recent discussion

The purpose of the following article is to offer a preliminary assessment of the question of regional centralization in the Persian Period and how this phenomenon is addressed and negotiated in biblical literature, especially as certain Pentateuchal traditions are in later transmission and interpretation processes used in a way that Jerusalem and its temple is *the only* central place of the Israelite cult. However, a growing body of research suggests that there not only was a YHWH-temple in post-exilic Yehud, but also in Samaria on Mt. Gerizim (5th-2nd century BCE), on the Egyptian island Elephantine (around 407 BCE, literarily and archeologically proven;[1] TAD A4.7/4.8/4.9), in Idumea (maybe in Maqqedah or in

[1] On the Elephantinian temple see von Pilgrim, Der Jahwe-Tempel, 142–145 and Rosenberg, The Jewish Temple at Elephantine, 4–12.

Semitica 60, 2018, p. 221-272.

Maresha) (mentioned on an ostracon in 4th century BCE, ISAP 1283/AL 283).[2] In Hellenistic times we find an additional temple of a Judean group in Tell Yahûdiye (Leontopolis) (founded 163 BCE; Jos. Ant. 12.388; 13.62-73; 20.236; Jos. Bell. 1.33; 7.426-436; and ceased service 72 CE: Jos. Bell. 7.426-436).[3] There may have even been – but this is discussed very controversially in the recent scholarly debate[4] – a temple or some sort of cult location in Transjordan, in the Ammanitis in *ʾAraq el-Emir* (29km east of Jericho) and – identified by two inscriptions found close to it – seemingly the home of the Judean family of the Tobiads of the 3rd or 2nd century BCE. Meanwhile the existence of some larger Yahwistic communities in the otherwise unknown *al-Jahudu* (town of Juda) in Mesopotamia has been proven thanks to the documents (mainly private certificates from late 6th/ early 5th century BCE) published by Pearce and Wunsch.[5] We know of no Jahu-temple or shrine in Mesopotamia, though Knauf refers very cautiously to a cuneiform archive from Iraq, where, as rumor has it, such a Judean temple may have been mentioned.[6] Nevertheless, there is good reason to assume that the Golah communities had one or even several sanctuaries.[7] There is

[2] *Editio princeps*: Lemaire, Nouvelles Inscriptions araméennes d'Idumée Tome II, Text 283, table XLVIII, 149–156. The most recent edition (2016) of this ostracon in Yardeni, The Jesselsohn Collection, 114f. In 2015 Lemaire presented his most recent reading of the ostracon: Lemaire, Levantine Epigraphy and History in the Achaemenid Period (539-332 BCE), 118f (with fig. 3.25) – applying several changes in reaction to critical remarks on Lemaire's readings and reconstructions of the text by of Porten and Yardeni, see e.g. Porten/Yardeni, Why the Unprovenienced Idumean Ostraca Should be Published, 87 fig. 8, with page 77; Porten/Yardeni, The House of Baalrim, 142 fig. 21, with page 112f; Porten/Yardeni, Textbook of Aramaic Ostraca from Idumea, liii fig. 40, with page xxi.

[3] See Frey, Temple and Rival Temple, 187–193.

[4] See for the discussion Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 213f.

[5] Pearce/Wunsch, Documents of Judean Exiles and West Semites in Babylonia in the Collection of David Sofer; see also Knauf/Guillaume, A History of Biblical Israel, 153-156; Frevel, Geschichte Israels, 283f.

[6] Cf. Knauf, The Glorious Days of Manasseh, 273 with note 84.

[7] If we are right in assuming that there is strong literary activity amongst the exiles, then the existence of a temple would be a plausible pre-condition for this. For further considerations see Knauf/Guillaume, A History of Biblical Israel, 155.

also evidence – though most of it remains disputed so far – of numerous non-Yahwistic sanctuaries in the area surrounding Yehud.[8] In short, recent scholarship is in agreement that the temple of Jerusalem was not the only YHWH-sanctuary in post-exilic times.[9]

When trying to place those other sanctuaries within the seemingly Jerusalem-centered cult, many scholars presuppose the establishment of a theologically and ideologically reflected Jerusalem-centered cult centralization (cf. Deut 12 and related texts) in the exilic[10] (or late monarchic[11]) period. This concept would have been promoted by the Judean Golah-returnees and politically enforced in the province in Yehud and about 100 years later also in the province of Samaria. As a result, the regions were purged of all foreign and other Yahwistic shrines. This process has been called a "religious revolution". The theory is held by Stern and adapted by many others.[12] There are a lot of problems and shortcomings with

[8] Cf. Lynch, Monotheism and Institutions, 60f; Valkama, What Do Archaeological Remains Reveal of the Settlements in Judah, 39-59; Becking, On the Identity of the 'Foreign' Women, 71; Knowles, Centrality Practised, 44–48.

[9] For more comprehensive overviews of the multiplicity of Yahwistic sites in the post-exilic era see Grabbe, 'Many Nations will be Joined to YHWH in That Day', 175-187; Edelman, Cultic Sites and Complexes beyond the Jerusalem Temple, 82–103; Frevel, Geschichte, 323-326; Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 210-214.

[10] Deut 12* is traditionally dated to the reign of Josiah (see de Wette, Beiträge; furthermore e.g., Wellhausen, Prolegomena, 26-28.32-34) (but cf. Knauf, The Glorious Days of Manasseh, 251-275: "Manasseh"; and Na'aman, The Debated Historicity of Hezekiah's Reform in the Light of Historical and Archaeological Research, 179-195: "Hezekiah").

[11] The Neo-Assyrian dating for the core version of Deuteronomy is no longer unanimously accepted, as the discussion of the last two decades has demonstrated. Several scholars now argue that the Neo-Babylonian (see Finsterbusch, Deuteronomium, 25; Aurelius, Zukunft jenseits des Gerichts, 39-42; Kratz, The Composition of the Narrative Books of the Old Testament, 114–133) or even the early Persian period present a more compelling time for the composition of Deuteronomy and the related texts (see, e.g., Pakkala, The Date of the Oldest Edition of Deuteronomy, 388-401; idem, The Dating of Deuteronomy: A Response to Nathan MacDonald, ZAW 123 (2011), 431–436 (for a critical response to Pakkala see Macdonald, Issues in the Dating of Deuteronomy: A Response to Juha Pakkala, 431–435); Dietrich, Kollektive Schuld und Haftung, 34.).

[12] See e.g., Stern, Religion in Palestine in the Assyrian and Persian periods, 245–255; idem, From Many Gods to the One God, 395–403; idem, The Religious Revolution in Persian-Period Judah, 199–205.

this theory, however. The growing critical debate cannot be fully rehearsed here for reasons of space, but the excellent works of Frevel and Pyschny show most clearly the fundamental methodological questions about Stern's works by using case studies which unveil a colorful picture of the YHWH-cult in Yehud.[13] According to Stern's theory, in Persian times Jerusalem is understood as the only and main center of Judean orthodoxy. This view follows from the biblical, or more precisely, the Judean reflection of the history of Israel as presented for example in the Deuteronomistic History, Ezra-Nehemiah or the Chronicles. As Jerusalem is in this light seen as the only legitimate place for the worship of YHWH, scholarship tends to describe the other groups as deviations, sects or separatist communities that were, because of their deviant cult, causing trouble for the Judean main group. It is in this vein that Frey speaks of a "rival temple" in referring to Mt. Gerizim, Leontopolis and Elephantine;[14] Zangenberg and Sasse refer to Mt. Gerizim as a "competing sanctuary" ("Konkurrenzheiligtum")[15]; Kalimi speaks of the Gerizim temple as a "rival sanctity"[16,] and Knoppers interprets the Samarian sanctuary as a "Yahwistic rival" to its counterpart in Jerusalem.[17] Becking adopts a historical scenario in which the "competing temples"[18] vie with each other for theological and ideological legitimacy. In his words:

> "The presence of competing Yahwistic temples in the Persian Period seems to be a greater threat to the identity of Jerusalem as the centre of 'real Yahwism'. Although little is known about the actual cultic practices at Samaria/Gerizim, Maqqēdāh or Lachish in the Per-

[13] See Frevel/Pyschny (Ed.), A "Religious Revolution" in Yehûd? (2014); a comprehensive summary of Sterns arguments in Frevel/Pyschny, A "Religious Revolution" in Yehûd? The Material Culture of the Persian Period as a Test Case: Introduction, 1–22; and in Frevel, Der Eine oder die Vielen?, 238–265, esp. 251–263.

[14] See Frey, Temple and Rival Temple. The Cases of Elephantine, Mt. Gerizim, and Leontopolis.

[15] See Zangenberg, Berg des Segens, Berg des Heils, 304; Sasse, Geschichte Israels, 91 with no. 4.

[16] Kalimi, Early Jewish Exegesis, 33.

[17] Knoppers, Jews and Samaritans, 11.

[18] See Becking, On the Identity of the 'Foreign' Women, 70–72.

> sian Period, the presence of these sanctuaries indicates the re-emergence of poly-Yahwism; i.e. a variety of forms of Yahwism differing from temple to temple. (...). The presence of sanctuaries at the border of the Yehudite territory might have fuelled antipathy in Jerusalem towards inhabitants connected with the territories across the borders."[19]

Furthermore, Kratz clarified when looking at the phenomenon of cult centralization in his most recent work "Historical and Biblical Israel: The History, Tradition, and Archives of Israel and Judah" from the year 2015: "the Samaritans (...) fell into conflict with Jerusalem over 'the place that Yhwh will choose (or has chosen)".[20]

The reasons why there were other Yahwistic sanctuaries are accordingly seen either as a *deliberate distinction* (as assumed in the case of Mt. Gerizim), or in the *lack of information*[21] or in the *lack of acquaintance* with the biblical texts, as has been widely assumed for the Judaeo-Aramaic community in Elephantine. Hence, Pakkala can conclude: "The Elephantine papyri imply that the principles of Deuteronomy were not commonly acknowledged even in the fifth century BCE".[22] Again, due to space restriction I cannot go into a detailed discussion about the ideas of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, which is the implicit backdrop for these views. From a methodological perspective, the discussion is still characterized by a ques-

[19] Becking, Temples across the Border, 53. He is repeating this observation in an article published in 2011: idem, On the Identity of the 'Foreign' Women, 70–72. Jonker, Being both in the Periphery and in the Centre, 259 follows Becking in this.

[20] Kratz, Historical and Biblical Israel, 55.

[21] This argument can be found especially in older publications. It has been assumed that the Judeo-Arameans in Elephantine didn't experience the religious evolution of Israel's religion in the exile as they had fled to Egypt before the cultic reforms, either during the reform of Hezekiah or Josiah (see e.g., Porten, Archives from Elephantine, 25–38). Today the question of the origin of the Elephantinian group is handled more carefully especially as in the Aramaic letters they call themselves a "Yehudite garrison" (חילא יהודיא; TAD A4.1,1.10; C3.15,1) or a garrison from Syene (חילא זי סון; e.g., TAD A5.2,7; B2.10,2–4), indicating that the group (or at least several individuals) stems from Persian times Yehud; see on the discussion Rohrmoser, Götter, Tempel und Kult der Judäo-Aramäer von Elephantine, 47; and Becking, Yehudite Identity in Elephantine, 128–142).

[22] Pakkala, The Date of the Oldest Edition of Deuteronomy, 397.

tionable mixing of biblical, archaeological and historical argumentation levels. The basic problem of these approaches is the hasty drawing of conclusions about the literary history of certain biblical books (esp. Deuteronomy) on the one hand, and the presumption of the religious-political enforcement of these texts in post-exilic times on the other hand, about which we actually do not know much. To illustrate the complexity of the various interdependencies that have not been fully unraveled yet: The Judeans from Elephantine wrote a petition to Samaria and to Jerusalem regarding the reconstruction of their Jahu-temple (TAD A4.7/4.8; dated 407 BCE). Later, the Elephantinian community received answers from both Bagohi, the governor of Yehud and Delayah, who was probably governor of Samaria (TAD A4.9). Although the existence of a text like Deut 12 can be presumed for this time, the officials from both provinces had no real objections based on the law of cult centralization, when they authorized the rebuilding of the Elephantinian temple.[23]

This brief sketch of the recent discussion, which could easily be supplemented by further considerations, indicates that the issue of centralization in the Persian period is significantly more complex than previously assumed and the field of research needs more in-depth studies.

It is worth asking if the (biblically loaded) concept of cult centralization is the right category to describe the phenomenon of the multiplicity of Yahwistic shrines and/or temples in the post-exilic era. Could it not be possible that at least some of these Yahwistic places are to be understood as actual *regional centers* of Yahwistic activities, and not just as inferior shrines in comparison to the principal temple in Jerusalem? In my eyes a renewed examination of the phenomenon what might be called regional centralization,

[23] They did however explicitly not authorize the holocausts in this sanctuary. This could bear the notion that Jerusalem and (Mt. Gerizim) had the status of central sanctuaries – and the sanctuaries in the peripheries as Elephantine did not have the same status, see Dušek, Mt. Gerizim Sanctuary, 118; Rüterswörden, Deuteronomium, 36f. The other possibility can however not be ruled out, that the explicit exclusion of animal sacrifices offers the Egyptian satrap a bribe in exchange for the support in rebuilding the temple; this could have been mandatory to pacify the local Egyptian worshippers of the ram-god Khnum, see Kottsieper, Die Religionspolitik der Achämeniden und die Juden von Elephantine, 150–178.

is therefore necessary. This would mean that the biblical, archeological and historical evidences are studied in their own right before merging them together in a theory of cult centralization of the Persian times and Early Hellenistic times.

The article can only offer a first step in this direction and will focus on the Samarian Yahwism and its temple on Mt. Gerizim. Against the background of this discussion outlined above *two* leading perspectives will be addressed:

1. First, was Mt. Gerizim just another Yahu-/YHWH-sanctuary in the line of the one in Elephantine, Idumaea and so on, as the Samarian sanctuary is often summed up in that way in recent scholarship? Or was Mt. Gerizim more likely a center of YHWH-worship comparable to the Second temple in Jerusalem? (chap. I.).
2. Second, what can be said about the relationship of the two Yahwisms, especially about the two Yahwistic Sanctuaries existing not more than 65km in linear distance from each other? Essentially the different biblical traditions will be addressed here (chap. II.)

I. Mt. Gerizim as the Centre of Samarian Yahwism

Some General Notions on the Cult on Mt. Gerizim

With respect to the Samarian Yahwists in antiquity – later known as "Samaritans" – we have found ourselves in recent years in the fortunate position of witnessing an extensive enlargement of the primary source material that documents the culture of the Samarian region, largely due to the archaeological excavations on Mt. Gerizim, the discovery of the Samarian coins from the Persian pe-

riod, the bullae and papyrus finds in Wadi ed-Daliyeh, Zertal's survey results in the Samarian region,[24] and the significant progress made in editing the sources[25] and their placement[26] in cultural and religious history. This goes some way to explaining why the "Samaritans" have returned to a position of focal interest in Old Testament research in recent years. Current studies at the monograph

[24] See Zertal, The Manasseh Hill Country Survey, Vols. 1 and 2.

[25] The full edition of the Samaria-papyri has been available since 2009 thanks to Dušek (Dušek, Les manuscrits araméens). The nearly 400 inscriptions from Mt. Gerizim in Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek have been available in the editio princeps since 2004 (Magen/Misgav/Tsfania, Mt. Gerizim Excavations I). The Samarian coins have been available in a well-edited book by Meshorer/Qedar since 1991 (Meshorer/Qedar, The Coinage of Samaria; 1999: Meshorer/Qedar, Samarian Coinage). More recent finds in Gitler/Tal, Coins with the Aramaic Legend Šhrw and Other Unrecorded Samarian Issues, 47–68 (from the year 2006); and Ronen, On the Chronology of the Yehud Falcon Coins, 39–45 (from the year 2009). The 72 coins from the Persian period found at the sanctuary on Mt. Gerizim are also potentially instructive. Regrettably, to date Magen has only been able to provide a very rough characterization of the coins and provides photographs of only 26 coins. Magen describes, in a preliminary report on the excavations, 69 of the 72 coins (the other 3 were not identifiable) in a very rough and imprecise way in a brief paragraph (Magen, The Dating of the First Phase of the Samaritan Temple, 179f). Pictures of a total of 26 coins from the Persian period can be found in the same article on pages 207–211, fig. 27–29; cf. Magen, Mt. Gerizim Excavations II, 196–199, fig. 7–9.19.

The clay impression seals from Wadi ed-Daliyeh are published and analysed in Leith, Wadi Daliyeh I. A selection of the clay impression seals was first published in Cross, The Papyri and Their Historical Implications, 17–29. The seals published in Stern, A Hoard of Persian Period Bullae, 7-30 probably come from the same find. The most recent publication on this topic, Keel, Corpus der Stempelsiegel-Amulette, 340–379. Only the excavation publications (see Magen's main publications JSP 2/JSP 7/JSP 8) still omit various absolutely essential details such as the stratigraphic data.

[26] For a systematic classification of the Samarian coins, see Wyssmann, Vielfältig geprägt. For a classification of the iconographic traditions on the Samarian clay bullae, now see the excellent study in almost monographic dimensions by Schroer/Lippke, Beobachtungen zu den (spät-)persischen Samaria-Bullen aus dem Wadi ed-Daliyeh 305-390). A comparative-palaeographic study of the Gerizim inscriptions was published by Dušek in 2012 (Dušek, Inscriptions). For a critical review of the finds at the Mt. Gerizim excavations as well as their placement in religious history, see Zangenberg, The Sanctuary on Mount Gerizim, 399-420 and Hensel, Juda and Samaria, 35-76 (Hensel with particular reference to the often-neglected temple city on Mt. Gerizim).

level into the "Samaritans" of antiquity include Kartveit (2009[27]), Dušek (2012[28]), Knoppers (2013[29]), Pummer (2016[30]) and Hensel (2016[31]). Apparently, a certain consensus seems to have formed (and it is the work of Knoppers that should receive acknowledgement for this[32]) that it is no longer necessary to give full credence to the polemically distorted reports such as those in 2 Kings 17, Ezr 4:1ff about the decline of the Northern Kingdom in 722 BCE, which stress a certain ethnic, cultic and cultural *discontinuity* between Northern "Israel" and its successor culture, which is presented as being multi-ethnic and consisting largely of Mesopotamian colonists. In actual fact it is indeed possible to identify a good degree of cultural continuity in the region. Whilst there were a number of disasters and upheavals in the region as a result of the Assyrian conquest, their outcomes were not fundamentally dissimilar to those which Juda is assumed to have undergone some 150 years later when it in turn was conquered. It is only in the historical reflections of certain Old Testament texts and their extra-biblical reception (such as in Josephus' works[33]) that the North is said to have disappeared completely.

The recognition of this continuity is especially critical when we now look to the Persian period and the construction of the sanctuary on Gerizim, particularly because the establishment of the Samarian sanctuary is still predominantly interpreted in line with

[27] Kartveit, The Origin of the Samaritans.

[28] Dušek, Inscriptions. Dušek concentrates primarily on the Mt. Gerizim inscriptions. In two of the study's three chapters, however, he seeks to identify the YHWH-worshippers of Mt. Gerizim (p. 65–118; Chapter 2), and to outline a history of the southern Levant between Antiochus III and Antiochus IV (p. 119–151; Chapter 3).

[29] Knoppers, Jews and Samaritans.

[30] Pummer, The Samaritans. A Profile.

[31] Hensel, Juda und Samaria.

[32] Cf. Knoppers, In Search of Post-Exilic Israel, 309–338; idem, Revisiting the Samaritan Question in the Persian Period, 265–289; idem, Cutheans or Children of Jacob?, 223–239, the core findings of which can now be found in idem, Jews and Samaritans, esp. 103-109.

[33] On the portray of the Samaritans by Josephus see Pummer, The Samaritans in Flavius Josephus, and Kartveit, The Origin of the Samaritans, 71-108; idem, Josephus on the Samaritans – his *Tendenz* and Purpose, 109-120.

the presentation of Josephus (*Ant*. 11.297-347). He claimed that a group of dissident Jerusalem priests and their followers – whom he calls "renegade Jews" (*Ant*. 11.340: τῶν ἀποστατῶν τοῦ Ἰουδαίων ἔθνους) – built the temple above Shechem in protest against the central sanctuary of Jerusalem.[34] To be sure, Josephus is said to have erred with his chronological placement of the construction in 332 BCE (according to the estimation of Magen, the leader of the excavation at Gerizim),[35] or he consciously relocated it from the 5th century BCE to the Persian-Hellenistic transition, in order to show that the Samarian worshippers operated opportunistically both under Persian and Hellenistic supremacy (so, most recently, Kartveit). [36] Josephus' basic trustworthiness is certainly not doubted.[37] Yet according to everything that we can currently reconstruct from the sources regarding the Samarian Yahwists, this group was not a late arrival in the region. The continuity reaches from the monarchic period into the Persian period.

Now to the archaeological finds: As has been clear for a solid decade, the archaeological excavations that were carried out between 1983 and 2006 under Magen's leadership, through the civil service of the Israeli military administration of "Judea and Samaria,"[38] have uncovered the Samarian temple on the summit of

[34] For a detailed analysis of *Ant*. 11 see Pummer, The Samaritans in Flavius Josephus, 103-155; Kartveit, Josephus on the Samaritans, 114-117; Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 270-272.

[35] See Magen/Misgav/Tsfania, Mt. Gerizim Excavations I, 6.10; Magen, Gerizim Excavations II, 149.167f.171-175; idem, Bells, Pendants, Snakes and Stones, 30f.

[36] See Kartveit, Samaritan Self-Consciousness, 449-470 from the year 2014; taking up and expanding here earlier considerations in idem, The Origin of the Samaritans, 72f.79.109-120, esp. 114-116; idem, Josephus on the Samaritans – his *Tendenz* and Purpose, 109-120.

[37] On the tendency of a "historical rehabilitation" of Josephus' historiography concerning the Samaritans see the scholarly discussion reviewed in Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 13-19.

[38] The most important publication volumes of the excavation: Magen/Misgav/Tsfania, Mt. Gerizim Excavations I; und Magen, Gerizim Excavations II.

Gerizim. The sanctuary existed there (at the latest[39]) since the middle of the 5th century BCE. I leave aside the necessary debate about the localization of the Persian times altar, which is not very clear from Magen's publications,[40] and the discussion of the architectural form of the sanctuary, as well as the question whether or not there was an actual Persian times temple building within the *temenos* of the Mt. Gerizim sanctuary. Zangenberg and I have addressed these problems with different conclusions elsewhere.[41] I would argue that the rendering of the Samarian Sanctuary in the Mt. Gerizim inscriptions – mentioning a "house of sacrifice" (בית

[39] On the dating of the temple in the 1st half of the 5th century BCE see Magen, Gerizim Excavations II, 167–170; idem, The Dating of the First Phase, 176f; for criticism see Dušek, Inscriptions, 3 (2nd half of the 5th century). For some considerations that the sanctuary could be older see Hensel, 43-47, and Dušek, Mt. Gerizim Sanctuary, 111-133, esp. 128f.

[40] In short: In the vicinity of the east wall, Magen discovered an altar under the remains of a Hellenistic-period gate. He also associates the altar with ashes and thousands of bones of sacrificial animals have been found (Magen, Gerizim Excavations II, 121.148f). The altar is marked in the area plan on page 99, fig. 180 (index n. 24). A photo of a deep cut which should show on its ground the altar (but it is hard to determine from the angle of the photo what one is looking at) is to be found on page 121, fig. 223. The unclear photos do not allow any additional conclusions regarding what Magen, precisely on the basis of this shaft, discovered. It seems that Magen was himself not entirely certain about the location of the altar. In Magen's most recent publication regarding Gerizim, from 2010, the altar is marked some meters away from the (Hellenistic) gate, halfway between the gate and what he takes to be a Persian-period temple building, that is approximately at the level of the Persian-period six-chamber gate (Magen, Bells, Pendants, Snakes and Stones, 29. The reconstruction sketch of the temple areal is the exact same as in his earlier publication, idem, Gerizim Excavations II, 103 fig. 185; but here he localizes the altar in the commentary far more to the east than before). In addition to the main altar, there is said to have been a kind of secondary altar, which was found east of the north gate in a building with an inner court, and which is very well documented (Magen, Bells, Pendants, Snakes and Stones, 30f; idem, Gerizim Excavations II, 117 with fig. 213.214). One of the rooms seems to have held a clay altar, which was covered with a thick layer of ash and bones. Magen connects the alter with the מְקוֹם הַדֶּשֶׁן, "place of the fat-ash," mentioned in Lev 1:16, on which the rest of the whole burnt offering on the main altar was brought, in order to completely burn it.

[41] See Zangenberg, The Sanctuary on Mount Gerizim, 406–409; Hensel, Das JHWH-Heiligtum am Garizim, 73-93; idem, Juda und Samaria, 39-47.

דבחא; n. 199[42]), a "sanctuary" (מקדש; n. 150), a "shrine" (אגרה; n. 200) and a "temple" (כלה[ה; n. 211) – strongly suggests an actually building to have been erected in the 5th century BCE.[43]

In the Hellenistic period, first in the middle of the 3rd century BCE, under Ptolemaios III (246-221 BCE), and then in the early 2nd century BCE, the grounds were massively developed, the holy area was greatly expanded, so that a sprawling temple-complex existed.

The excavations show no evidence anywhere on the site of the temple or in the vicinity of the surrounding city to indicate that different or multiple gods were being worshipped. Likewise, iconic depictions of gods, humans and even animals are entirely absent. This corresponds to the epigraphic findings: The inscriptions found on the Mt. Gerizim temple appear to include terms for the god which was worshipped there, namely אלהא, אדני and יהוה. Actually naming the god on Mt. Gerizim appears to have been avoided, perhaps because it – and here one can only speculate – was considered to be too holy? The Tetragrammaton is to be found on one stone block in paleo-Hebrew inscription n. 383, and in the form יהוה אחד inscribed on a silver ring (which is however probably from a later period,[44] n. 391). In two Hebrew inscriptions (n. 150/151), the term אדני "Lord", can be found – a term which in later times came to be the accepted name for YHWH (Adonai). This evidence clearly indicates that it was only YHWH who was worshipped at this site.[45]

The overwhelming majority of the inscriptions found in the area of the temple concern private inscriptions, in which individuals explicate their own concerns or those of their own acquaintances. Only five inscriptions (n. 382–385.387) can be seen as *public*

[42] The numbering of the inscriptions here and in the following are taken from Magen/Misgav/Tsfania, Mt. Gerizim Excavations I.

[43] Though most are admittedly from the Hellenistic period, only some stem from the Persian period.

[44] Cf. Magen/Misgav/Tsfania, Mt. Gerizim Excavations I, 254f; Dušek, Inscriptions, 3.

[45] Also highlighted previously by Kartveit, The Origin of the Samaritans, 209; Becking, Samaritan Identity, 65; and Kratz, Historisches und biblisches Israel, 232f.

inscriptions, because they were especially carefully prepared. Magen supposes that the inscriptions, except for one (n. 223),[46] were not found *in situ*, and their original place had been one of the inner walls of the holy precinct, "possibly a sort of retaining wall of the temple, similar to that of the Temple in Jerusalem. This wall apparently separated the temple from the other buildings in the sacred precinct and permitted the exclusion of people forbidden entrance to the temple itself."[47]

These texts concern entirely typical votive inscriptions, of which only two fixed dedication formulae appear, with minimal differences. The short form reads:[48] "What NN., son of NN. [from NN.] offered." ([NN. מן] NN. בר NN. ד/זי הקרב). This can also be extended with the addition: "for himself, for his wife and children" (על נפשה על אנתתה ועל בנוהי). In addition, a longform exists, which closes the short from with a "benedictory formula" (Magen)[49]: "to the good remembrance before God in this place" (טב קדם לדכרן אלהא באתרא דנה).[50] The dedication formula, particularly the benedictory formula of the long form, has certain parallels with the votive inscriptions and graffiti from Assur, Hatra, Jebel Ram, Palmyra, Sumatar Harabesi and some synagogue inscriptions,[51] which show that the cult practice on Gerizim stood within the spectrum of ritual practice in the Persian and Hellenistic periods.

[46] Inscription n. 223 was found inlaid in the monumental staircase on the eastern slope, on this Magen/Misgav/Tsafania, Mount Gerizim Excavations I, 13f.187.

[47] Magen, Mount Gerizim and the Samaritans, 105. On the ritual practise in Jerusalem (within its context of the Ancient Near East) see now Mathys, „Erinnere dich meiner, mein Gott, mir zum Guten" (Neh 13,31), 345-352, with interesting considerations on parallel of the practice of votive inscriptions inside a temple areal.

[48] On this see Magen/Misgav/Tsafania, Mount Gerizim Excavations I, 16f.

[49] Magen/Misgav/Tsafania, Mount Gerizim Excavations I, 18.

[50] Especially on the benedictory formula with its parallels in other Aramaic inscriptions and the possible biblical background of the formula see de Hemmer Gudme, Before the God in this Place; for further religious-historical considerations on the formula in the context of the Second temple and in the book of Nehemiah see Mathys, „Erinnere dich meiner, mein Gott, mir zum Guten" (Neh 13,31), 326–362, esp. 352-356.

[51] For the relevant inscriptions see de Hemmer Gudme, Before the God in this Place, 91–134; idem, Out of Sight, Out of Mind?, 1–15; see also Healey, "May He Be Remembered for Good": An Aramaic Formula, 177–186, on this practice.

Taking all these observations together it is highly probable that a cult, even an aniconic one, was in place on Mt. Gerizim that was largely comparable to that in Jerusalem.[52] This is the very general evidence of the archaeological finds, which has already been repeatedly refined in various publications, and whose matters of detail, as well as the already thoroughly worked-out issues of the excavation and the publication history, do not need to be repeated here.[53]

Mt. Gerizim as the Central Samarian Temple?

Particularly revealing are the places of origin[54] of the Yhwh worshippers mentioned in many inscriptions. Inscriptions n. 14 and 15 mention the city of Samaria (שמרין), the inscription 12.36.39[55] mentions Shechem (שכם), at the foot of Gerizim. Further places that are mentioned in the inscriptions are כפר חגי (n. 3), יקמעם (n. 7), כפר [תא]עבר (n. 8) und טורא ט[ב]א (n. 11). Five place names are not legible (n. 21.34.40.76.77). The locality יקמעם is possibly the Levitical asylum city Jokmeam (יָקְמְעָם) mentioned in 1 Chr 6:53,[56] in the territory of Ephraim (cf. 1 Kings 4:12). Even when it is not always possible to identify the location, the inscriptions nevertheless attest to what the archaeological results had already shown: Gerizim was a temple that had more than just local significance, but was also frequented transregionally.

[52] On the operations of the cult on Mt. Gerizim, and especially how they can be inferred from the inscriptions and the remains of animal bones and ashes, see Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 40.54-58.

[53] See e.g. amongst the newest publications Dušek, Mt. Gerizim Sanctuary, 111-133; Hensel, Das JHWH-Heiligtum am Garizim, 73-82; Zangenberg, The Sanctuary on Mount Gerizim, 399–420.

[54] The place of origin of the worshippers regularly follows מן and follows up the mentioning of the name of the father; see Magen/Misgav/Tsfania, Mt. Gerizim Excavations I, 28–30 for examples. See also Dušek, Inscriptions, 83; de Hemmer Gudme, Before the God in this Place, 76; Becking, Samaritan Identity, 62.

[55] In inscription n. 36 the place name is damaged and has to be reconstructed to כם[ש]; also in n. 39: [ם]שכ.

[56] Cf. Magen/Misgav/Tsfania, Mt. Gerizim Excavations I, 29.

When one now turns the attention away from the sanctuary itself, it is notable that the temple complex formed merely the acropolis of a large city connected in the east, which was founded and grew in a minimum of time – first under Ptolemaic, and then under Seleucid rule.[57] Magen assumes that at the high festivals, approximately 10,000 pilgrims could have visited the temple.[58] The estimated number certainly appears somewhat too optimistic, but it is clear that Gerizim must have had considerable significance in the post-exilic period. The surface area of the city and associated temple complex, ca. 30ha,[59] reaches the dimensions of a regional metropolis not achieved by any other city known from the sources, and far surpasses Shechem (estimated at 6ha).

Additionally, according to Kartveit, the phrase "in this place" from the Gerizim inscription, which is unparalleled in other comparable inscriptions, gives an impression of a community dedicated to its own place of worship. In Kartveit's opinion, "the phrase 'in this place' can be interpreted as an expression of the self-consciousness of the dedicators: they form a community from places around Mount Gerizim, and they emphasize their religious attachment to this place."[60]

[57] On the temple city see in detail Magen, Mt. Gerizim Excavations II, 3–93.

[58] Cf. Magen, Mt. Gerizim Excavations II, 9.

[59] The 30ha are my approximation. The numbers of the size differ in the various publications of the excavation. Moreover, the publications of other authors mention also differing numbers: Magen, Mt. Gerizim Excavations II, 9: "The city was some 800m long and 500m wide, with a total area of about 400 dunams (= 40ha) [...] The total area of the sacred precinct in the Hellenistic period was about 30 dunams (= 3ha)." Kieweler, s.v. "Garizim": "Es wurde eine befestigte Stadt der hellenistischen Periode mit einem Areal von ungefähr 100 Ar (= 1ha) auf der höchsten Erhebung zum Teil unter dem Bauschutt der byzantinischen Zeit gefunden." Böhm, Wer gehörte in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit zu „Israel"?, 185: "Die bereits seit frühptolemäischer Zeit bestehende, den Tempel und seine Anlage umgebende Siedlung, die offenbar zunächst allein Priestern und anderem Tempelpersonal gedient hatte, wurde jetzt zu einer ca. 30ha großen, unbefestigten Stadt erweitert." Zangenberg speaks of 480ha (Zangenberg, The Sanctuary on Mount Gerizim, 409), but this is a typing error (personal communication); he meant 40ha.

[60] Kartveit, Samaritan Self-Consciousness, 466.

The significance of Gerizim also extends beyond the provincial borders.[61] Two Greek inscriptions from the early Hellenistic period found on the Greek island of Delos designate Gerizim (here: ΑΡΓΑΡΙΖΕΙΝ[62]) as the cultic place[63] towards which the local Samarian community on Delos orientated themselves, and to which offerings were brought or payments were given (ΑΠΑΡΧΟΜΕΝΟΙ, inscription 1, line 1-2; inscription 2, line 1[64]).

A New Greek Inscription from Mt. Gerizim (4th-2nd Century BCE)

A second example of the international significance as a central sanctuary is a little-known Greek inscription from a sundial that was found in the vicinity of the Samarian sanctuary at Mt. Gerizim. This sundial, of which we have only seen pictures in the official publication of Magen, together with a short note that it had been

[61] On the phenomenon of Samaritan diaspora in antiquity see Crown, The Samaritan Diaspora to the End of the Byzantine Era, 107–123; idem, The Samaritan Diaspora, 195–217; van der Horst, The Samaritan Diaspora in Antiquity, 136–147; idem, Samaritans at Rome?, 251–260; idem, The Jews of Ancient Crete, 12–27; Kippenberg, Garizim und Synagoge, 145–150.

[62] First edition: Bruneau, Les Israelites de Délos et la juiverie délienne, 466.504; s. noch die Tafel bei Llewelyn, A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Publis- hed 1984-1985, n. 12.

[63] On the two Greek inscriptions found on Delos (2nd/3rd century BCE) cf. Kartveit, The Origin of the Samaritans, 216–235 and Hensel, Samaritanische Identität in persisch-hellenistischer Zeit, 80–83.

[64] The verb ΑΠΑΡΧΟΜΕΝΟΙ used here is the equivalent of קרב in the Aramaic inscriptions. It is debated in both cases, if the terminology refers to an actual offering at a cultic place, or if it is used (at least in some places) in a figurative way: "making offerings" in the sense of sending taxes to the sanctuaries; for the Delos inscriptions cf. e.g. Kartveit, The Origin of the Samaritans, 223: "To send money to the temple was the normal Jewish practice." His translation of the Delos inscriptions therefore: (page 217): "Send the temple tax"; similarly Dušek, Inscriptions, 77f.

found,[65] is not officially published yet.[66] There is, however, an article by Meerson from the year 2010 that mentions and discusses the inscription in the broader context of the use of the title θεὸς ὕψιστος in pagan and Jewish inscriptions.[67] I will refer to this article in the following. The inscription can be dated on paleographical grounds somewhere between the 4th and 2nd century BCE. *Terminus ante quem* would be the destruction of Mt. Gerizim by John Hyrkanus I (134-104 BCE) around the year 111 BCE (Jos. *Ant*. 13.254–256; Jos. *Bell*. 1.62–63).[68] The inscription can be read as follows:

θεῷ ὑψίστῳ
Πτολεμαῖ[ος] ὁ χρηματαγω[γὸς]
τῶν ἀπ' Α[ἰγ]ύπτου ἁγίων δ[..]

"To the God Most High
Ptolemaios the *chrematagogos* (?)
From the holy place/sanctuary (?) of Egypt."

It is not clear what the term χρηματαγωγος means; in view of the scarce data the title could be interpreted as an administrator.[69] The dedication to θεὸς ὕψιστος clearly refers to Yhwh, the only god worshipped on Mt. Gerizim.[70] Line three is especially interesting,

[65] See Magen/Misgav/Tsfania, Mount Gerizim Excavations I, 13.

[66] Magen briefly mentions in Qadmoniot (2000: Mount Gerizim. A Temple City, 74–118) for the first time a sun dial found on Mt. Gerizim, together with a very small and low quality photo (Magen, Mount Gerizim. A Temple City, 88, Pl. 4; figure above on the right; no further description of the sundial in his written text). The same photograph can be found in his later publications, cf. idem, Mount Gerizim Excavations II, 156 with fig. 281 on the same page, and idem, Dating the First Phase, 168. The online publication of this article from the year 2010 finally has a high-quality photo in high resolution of the sundial, where the inscriptions can be identified very clearly.

[67] Meerson, One God Supreme, 44-47; see also my dealing with this inscription in Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 62-65.

[68] Meerson is dating the inscription t the "Hellenistic-early Roman period", Meerson, One God Supreme, 45.

[69] The references are discussed by Meerson, One Supreme God, 46.

[70] Contra Meerson: "I believe that although the sundial with the dedication to θεὸς ὕψιστος belonged to the earliest phase of the temple on Mount Gerizim (Tel

because it designates the named Ptolemaios as deliverer or donor of this votive offering, and therefore probably a representative of a Samarian diaspora community in Egypt (line 3: ἀπ' Α[ἰγ]ύπτου). The Samarian diaspora in Egypt is until now only attested by Josephus (Jos. *Ant*. 12.7-10; 13.74-79).[71] Here one can conclude that there not only existed a Samaritan diaspora in Egypt, but that some individuals at least considered the Mt. Gerizim sanctuary worth sending offerings to, let's say in certain special cases (what cases this may have been cannot be determined).

The second interesting point about the inscription is the mention of an ἁγίων in line three. Granted, the ending of the line is difficult to restore. Following Meerson's suggestion, ἁγίων can play the role of an adjective here for the following substantive in this way referring to some "holy goods" or the like (probably αγιων δ[ωρων] (= "holy goods")),[72] which Ptolemaios brought to Mt. Gerizim. But the substantive ἅγιον is also well known as the translation of the Hebrew מָקוֹם or מִקְדָּשׁ in the LXX.[73] So this inscription could refer to a Samarian sanctuary in Egypt, which would syntactically make the most sense in line three, translating: "(Ptolemaios) from the Sanctuary in Egypt." The obvious plural of ἅγιον would be no problem as the rendering of a sanctuary is well known from other Greek (pagan and Jewish-Christian) literature [74] and the translation of the Greek translation of the Hebrew equivalents (singular!) in the LXX (e.g., Exod 36:1; Lev 19:30 LXX; cf. Jdth 4:12; 1 Macc 3:43; Hebrews 8:2.9). The evidence should not be stressed all too much, before the inscription has been officially published and analyzed. Nevertheless, if my interpretation is accurate, it could be that there was only one temple within the region of Samaria, but Samarian Yahwists outside the provincial borders had their own local sanctuaries. The existence of such regional sanctuaries in the

er-Ras), it could maintain its spot after the temple was re-dedicated to Zeus." Meerson, One God Supreme, 50.

[71] On the Samarian diaspora in Egypt see Pummer, The Samaritans in Egypt, 213–232; Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 87-90.

[72] Meerson, One God Supreme, 46f.

[73] Some cases are already mentioned by Meerson, One God Supreme, 47, e.g. Num 3:38; 10:21; Isa 60:13; 26:21; Jer 28:51.

[74] S. the examples given in Bauer, Wörterbuch NT, 5th edition, *s.v.* ἅγιος, 19; and Lampe, Patristic Greek Lexicon, *s.v.* ἅγιος, 68.

diaspora is certainly also very likely for the Jewish exiles. Nevertheless, even from the perspective of the diaspora, Gerizim was seen as the central sanctuary.

II. The Perception of the Samarian Sanctuary: Historical and Biblical Perspectives

Samaria and Juda in Coexistence

Let us now move on to the following question: Did the Samarian sanctuary on Mt. Gerizim cause any rivalries with the Judean Yahwists as one would assume that the existence and the awareness of a central cultic site next to Jerusalem could cause serious conflicts with the self-image of the Judean Yahwists? While the various theories on the origins of the Samaritans differ in a lot of points on these conflicts all these theories share the notion that with the erection of the sanctuary on Mt. Gerizim rivalries between Judah and Samaria have reached their first zenith. The establishment of a Northern YHWH temple therefore serves as a relatively fixed point in dating the nascent phase of Judean-Samarian conflict, as formulated by Zangenberg in 2012 in an observation which is typical for current research: "The dedication of the new Yahwistic and Northern sanctuary was the first step towards the establishment of a distinct group of Northern YHWH worshippers."[75] Zangenberg joins here a long standing scholarly tradition whose origins reach back to the initial publication of Montgomery in 1907. Under the title of his monograph "The Earliest Jewish Sect. The Samaritans" he describes the exclusion of Samarian Yahwists from the "common Israel" in Persian times. Describing the Samarian Yahwists from the perspective of the (supposed Judean) orthodoxy, especially with the biblical text of centralization legislation like Deut 12

[75] Zangenberg, The Sanctuary on Mount Gerizim, 408.

in the background is still the most frequent paradigm one comes across in recent research.[76]

As a matter of fact, the very categorization of the Samarian Yahwists as a "Jewish sect", as even modern scholarship still tends to qualify them, is highly problematic. It sees the Samarians as a *deviation* of Judaism, with its roots *within* Judaism. All the available evidences from the Samaritans themselves suggest that they did not view themselves as Jews, but rather as Israelites.[77] One can only agree here with Knoppers' notion that "(v)iewing the Samaritans as a breakaway Jewish sect is too simplistic. The Yahwistic Samarian community must be granted its own historical integrity".[78]

When we take a look at the remains of the Persian Periods provinces Samaria and Yehud it becomes clear that this "conflict paradigm"[79] for the time after exile should be abandoned due to its inaccuracy. This is especially true for the Persian period, not least because the two groups of YHWH-worshippers existed in different

[76] See, e.g. de Hemmer Gudme, Before the God in this Place, 57f; Magen, Mount Gerizim Excavations II, 5; Dušek, Inscriptions, 75; Rappaport, Reflections on the Origins of the Samaritansm 10–19; Tilly, Die samaritanische Religionsgemeinschaft, 137 ("Bereits in spätpersischer Zeit bestand auf dem Gebiet des ehemaligen Nordreichs Israel die samaritanische Religionsgemeinschaft als eine jüdische Sondergruppe"); Sasse, Geschichte Israels, 91. This view is even in the field of Samaritan studies quite usual, see for example Kippenberg, Garizim und Synagoge, 57–59 ("die samaritanische Sekte": idem, Garizim und Synagoge, 92); Purvis, The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Origin of the Samaritan Sect; idem, The Samaritan Problem: A Case Study in Jewish Sectarianism in the Roman Era, 323–350; Coggins, Samaritans and Jews: The Origins of the Samaritans Reconsidered; Crown, Redating the Shism, 21 (the Samaritans "certainly were Jews before the schism"); Dexinger, Samaritan Origins and the Qumran Texts, 169–184 ("Jewish Sect"); Mor, The Persian, Hellenistic and Hasmonaean Period, 1–31; cf. also the literature mentioned in the research overview in Pummer, Samaritanism – A Jewish Sect?, 1–5 and idem, The Samaritans. A Profile, 9–25.

[77] On this see esp. Knoppers, Jews and Samaritans, 103–134. On the problem of seeing Samaritans as a Jewish sect see the nuanced discussion given by Pummer, The Samaritans. A Profile, 9–25.

[78] Knoppers, Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Zion, 313.

[79] For a comprehensive discussion and problematizing concerning the scholarly phenomenon, what I called "conflict-paradigm", see Hensel, Juda and Samaria, 7-28 and (a more condensed version of the latter) idem, On the Relationship of Juda and Samaria in Post-Exilic Times (forthcoming); cf. Hjelm, The Samaritans and Early Judaism, 30 and Frevel, Geschichte Israels, 321f.

provinces.[80] There was of course a serious north-south divide in Persian times, with Samaria being economically and politically far more developed and stronger than Yehud. But all these differences between the two provinces are not crucial to the question of the supposed Samarian-Judean conflicts. This is because both provinces were bound in to their own administrative, political, cultural and religious systems of reference and were not dependent on each other in the sense of conflicting interests. By no means were these differences more intense or more urgent than those with all the other provinces which surrounded Judah or Samaria. This observation is especially true concerning the sanctuary on Mt. Gerizim. The material remains of the sanctuary and its vicinity themselves contain no indications of any kind of full-blown argument with Jerusalem or other YHWH/Yahu/o-temples with respect to legitimacy. The Aramaic and Hebrew inscriptions from Mt. Gerizim describing the sanctuary (see above) do not distinguish between the Mt. Gerizim temple and any other, namely the temple in Jerusalem. Even the Aramaic formulation קדם אלהא באתרא דנה ("before God at this place"), which is frequently found in the commemorative wording of dedicatory inscriptions, is not couched in *exclusive* terms, but is similar to the common Hebrew and biblical phrase לפני יהוה "before YHWH".

In the Persian Period Samarian-Judean relations were in fact not marred by bitter conflict, but consisted largely of the two Yahwistic entities leading a parallel existence. I suggest here an alternative model of mutual contacts for the time of the 6th-4th century BCE., which I have worked out in detail in my recently published monograph on the relationship of Judah and Samaria.[81] Building on these insights, the Samarian-Judean relationship can be described as follows: in post-exilic times existed two independent Yahwistic communities (apart from some contact points), each with distinct contours, but sharing a (predominantly) monotheistic Yahwism and both having their own Yahwistic center. Both are to be seen as self-standing denominations of "Israel" in the post-exilic period.

[80] For a detailed discussion on all the archaeological, epigraphical and exegetical considerations in this question see Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 221-226.

[81] See Hensel, Juda und Samaria (2016).

The two groups of Yahwisms, the Samarian and the Judean varieties, were in continuous contact with each other throughout the Persian and Hellenistic periods, interacting with each other on the most diverse levels (though especially among religious elites).[82] As far as we know from the Elephantinian correspondence TAD A.4.7–4.9 (407 BCE), the religious, literate elites were at least in semi-regular contact with each other.[83]

In my understanding mutual contacts between those two groups led ultimately to the formation of the Pentateuch in the Persian period, thereby creating what might be termed a "common Pentateuch" – a thesis, which has been developed by several scholars in recent years[84] and which was already posited by Diebner in the 1980s.[85] Especially the general structure of Deuteronomy (leaving aside for the sake of this short study the question of a possible Northern or Southern origin of Deuteronomy[86]) hints towards a joined Judean-Samarian formation[87] or an at least pro-Samarian, concessive redactional reworking of the book. As the one holy place (the *Maqom*) isn't mentioned explicitly (neither Jerusalem

[82] On the various levels of interaction between Samaria and Juda see Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 163-194; and idem, On the Relationship of Juda and Samaria in Post-Exilic Times (forthcoming).

[83] A comprehensive description of the contacts and interactions between Judah and Samaria is given by Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 163-229.

[84] The Tora as a "compromise document" or "common Pentateuch", a theory currently proposed among others by Nihan, The Torah between Samaria and Judah, 187–223; Pummer, The Samaritans and Their Pentateuch, 237–269, esp. 239–247; Hensel, Die Vertauschung des Erstgeburtssegens, 290–314, esp. 305–312; idem, Juda und Samaria, 170ff (for a detailed overview of the research, see Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 187-194).

[85] See Diebner, Genesis als Buch der antik-jüdischen Bibel, 81–98 (1983) and then in 1996 a first comprehensive, methodical study: idem, Ekklesiologische Aspekte einer Kanon-Hermeneutik der hebräischen Bibel (TNK), 37–54 (a lecture held in 1996; in slightly revised form then in 1998 in DBAT 29 [1998]), 15–32).

[86] On this see the detailed overview of the recent discussion in Knoppers, The Northern Context of the Law-Code in Deuteronomy, 162-183; and Edenburg/Müller, A Northern Provenance for Deuteronomy?, 148–161; cf. Schorch, The Samaritan Version of Deuteronomy and the Origin of Deuteronomy, 23–37.

[87] On this issue see the excellent observations made by Knoppers, The Northern Context of the Law-Code in Deuteronomy, 162-183, esp. 177-183.

nor Mt. Gerizim) (this is even true for the whole Tora) the identification of the localization of the one *Maqom* is left to the respective group that reads and uses the texts to fill in the gap.[88]

Recent scholarship has pointed to several more *concessive concepts* regarding the legitimacy of the respective cultic place *within* the Torah: The redactional addition of Deut 27* seems to stem just from the Persian period and is according to Nihan, Knoppers and others[89] to be understood as a concession to the Samarian Sanctuary on Mt. Gerizim. As Nihan as one of the first successfully demonstrated, the instructions for the building of an altar and the offering of sacrifices in Deuteronomy 27 at Mt. Gerizim are a redactional, in itself multi-layered (with Deut 27:1-3.9-20 being the first layer, and vv. 4-8.11-13 the second)[90] insertion between Deuteronomy 26 and 28 that probably stem from Persian times. The text Deut 27* is unmistakably reminiscent of the altar law in Exod 20:24-26 which tolerates a multiplicity of altars ("in every place where YHWH causes his name to be remembered", Exod 20:24b), and opens in the context of the Pentateuchal narrative a "backdoor", so that the altar on Mt. Gerizim commanded in Deut 27 - which would be understood as a figurative depiction of the sanctuary on Mt. Gerizim[91] - could logically be identified with the unique altar in

[88] This idea has become very common amongst those who see the whole Pentateuch as a Judean-Samarian collaborative work, see e.g., Knoppers, The Northern Context of the Law-Code in Deuteronomy, 182-184; in his words: "Rather than viewing Deuteronomy as a Samarian project or as a Judahite project, it may be more helpful to view it ultimately as a collaborative project. Israel in Deuteronomy may not be literary shorthand for Judah or literary shorthand for Samaria, but an entity that both included and transcended each of them." (idem, The Northern Context of the Law-Code in Deuteronomy, 183f); cf. also Hjelm, Northern Perspectives in Deuteronomy, 184-204; and Müller, The Altar on Mount Gerizim (Deuteronomy 27:1-8), 197-213.

[89] See Nihan, The Torah between Samaria and Judah, 190-193; Knoppers, The Northern Context of the Law-Code in Deuteronomy, 162-183; Mathys, "Erinnere dich meiner, mein Gott, mir zum Guten" (Neh 13,31), 326f.

[90] Nihan, The Torah between Samaria and Judah, 190-193.

[91] To be clear here, Deut 11 or 27 do *not* mention any kind of sanctuary, just an altar. But given the evidence that in later days the mentioning of "Mt. Gerizim" in Deut 27,4 was purposely changed to "Mt. Ebal" (see below), this might be taken as indication that Deut 11 and 27 were understood as a kind of *etiology* of the Samarian sanctuary.

Deuteronomy 12. This is how Samarian Yahwists, using the same Tora as the Judean group in Perisan Period, have interpreted it. This interpolation of Dent 27* in the context can be understood as a concession "made to Samaria at the time of the Torah's redaction in the Persian Period."[92] The compromise achieved here would be to introduce Mt. Gerizim within the Torah as *legitimate cultic place* and leaving at the same time open the actual identity of the central altar commanded by Deuteronomy 12. That is what allowed "the coexistence of both cultic sites, *despite* the centralization law"[93] - as Nihan puts it.[94] It is in the same vein that Deut 11:29f, which also mentions Mt. Gerizim in a positive way, was added to the legal corpus of Deut 12-26.28*.[95] The public ceremonies mentioned in Deuteronomy 11:26-32 and Deut 27:1-26 are localized on Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal, with Mt. Gerizim being the mount of blessing (Deut 11:29; Deut 27:4/SamP; Deut 27:12). The erecting of the building of an altar on Mt. Gerizim [96] is explicitly mentioned in Deut 27:4/SamP.[97] Both interpolations bracket the central legal collection (Deut 12-26.28*). With the literary Mt. Gerizim standing at

[92] Nihan, The Torah between Samaria and Judah, 191.

[93] Nihan, The Torah between Samaria and Judah, 216.

[94] For Deut 27 see also Knoppers, The Northern Context of the Law-Code in Deuteronomy, 162-183 with similar observations.

[95] On the following see also Knoppers, The Northern Context of the Law-Code in Deuteronomy, 169-171.

[96] On the altar in Deut 27 see Müller, The Altar on Mount Gerizim, 148-161.

[97] As is now commonly accepted the reading of "Mt. Gerizim" in Deut 27:4 SamP (הרגריזים) represents the original reading. Several witnesses support this reading: Papyrus Giessen 19 (ARGAR[I]ZIM), Vetus Latina La[19a] *(Garzin),* the Samareitikon (*argarizim*). The reading בהרגרזים is now also supported by DSS fragment of Deut 27:4b-6, dating to the late-2nd/1st century BCE (Charlesworth, What is a Variant?, 201-212.273-274; for a critical examination of the fragment which provenance is not entirely clear see Schattner-Rieser, Garizim versus Ebal. Ein neues Qumranfragment samaritanischer Tradition?, 277–281). The MT reads in Deut 27,4 הַר עֵיבָל, as do most of witnesses to the LXX. For the textual evidences of the "Gerizim" and "Ebal"-reading see Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 176-178. On the ideological change from "Gerizim" to "Ebal" (MT) see also Müller, The Altar on Mount Gerizim, 199-202.212-214; Kartveit, the Place That the Lord Your God Will Choose, 201-216; idem, The Origin of the Samaritans, 300–309; Schorch, The Samaritan Version of the Deuteronomy, 28; Schenker, Le Seigneur, 349 n. 33; Pum-

such strategic positions it seems clear that the importance, the acceptance and/or the legitimation of the Samarian sanctuary played an important role here.

It can also be argued if the Priestly traditions with its "portable sanctuary" ("tent of meeting", אהל מועד) effectively promotes a significantly less centralized view of the Israelite cult than Deuteronomy, which – depending on the presupposed historical setting – either legitimizes the multiplicity of Yahwistic shrines within the land[98] or avoids purposely to identify this sanctuary with a specific site.[99] This "concessive nature" of P stays true even if one agrees with Rhyder that the Priestly writings seemingly *favor* the Southern (Judean) perspective[100] - and I personally think Rhyder's observations on the centrality discourse in P are accurate. While favoring the Southern sanctuary the Northern, Samarian sanctuary (or maybe even other Yahwistic sanctuaries) are not discarded or delegitimized within the overall concept of P.

If one tends to give credit to the theory of an "anti-deuteronimistic" Yahwist as elaborated by Chr. Levin, the Altar Law in Exod 20:24-26 could also be understood as an exilic or post-exilic re-interpretation of the exclusivist centralization legislation in Deut 12*.[101] I remain skeptical of the literary relationship of Deut 12 and Exod 20 in Levin's theory; the literary origin of Deut 12:13-19 seems more likely to be dependent on the Altar law and its reinterpretation.[102] But if Levin is right, then the altar-law in Exodus, allowing a shrine to be built "in every place where I cause My name to be

mer, The Samaritans and Their Pentateuch, 245; Nihan, The Tora Between Samaria and Judah, 187–223; Dušek, Inscriptions, 90f. Eshel/Eshel, Dating the Samaritan Pentateuch's Compilation, 218 relies on the originality of the "Ebal" reading.

[98] See Diebner, Gottes Welt, Moses Zelt und das salomonische Heiligtum, 127-154.

[99] See Douglas, Leviticus, 90-98; see also Nihan, Cult Centralization and the Torah Traditions in Chronicles, 256-258 for the discussion.

[100] This is the thesis of a not yet published PhD-thesis by Julia Rhyder (Lausanne) on the Centralizing Discourse in P from the year 2018.

[101] See Levin, Der Jahwist, 430-435; idem, Das Deuteronomium und der Jahwist, 121-136; cf. van Seters, The Altar Law, 164-174.

[102] For details see amongst others Rüterswörden, Deuteronomium, 49-53; on the similarities of Exod 20 and Deut 12 in terms of terminology see esp. Otto, Das Deuteronomium,343-348.

remembered" (Exod 20:24b), would relativize the exclusive legitimacy of Jerusalem in the time after the monarchy in favor of several Yahwistic sites inside the land.

A Different Voice in the Biblical Literatures: Criticizing the Samarian Sanctuary

As appropriate as the historical scenario of a concessive Samarian-Judean relationship in the Persian times may be, there are however different voices in the biblical literatures. There are quite a number of texts that deal with the Samarian Yahwists and their sanctuary in a critical, more often: in a decisive *polemical* way and from a distinctive *Judean* perspective:

The book of Ezra-Nehemiah in its present form seems to display strong anti-Samarian "hermeneutics", in a way that it de-legitimizes the Northern YHWH-worshippers and their sanctuary.[103] For example, the political controversy of Nehemiah with Sanballat, the Governor of Samaria, Tobijah and Geshem displayed in e.g., Neh 2:10.19[104] is a rather late, Hellenistic re-writing of a quite neutral *Bericht*,[105] that described Nehemiah's building campaign, the so-called Nehemiah-memoir of the 5th century BCE.[106] The Hellenistic redactional additions portray the Samarian, Sanballat, as the main leader of a political campaign against Nehemia and thus against the rebuilding of Jerusalem.[107] It is unlikely that the three adversaries of Nehemiah ever had any dealings with each other. As has been shown by Kratz, Grätz, Hensel[108] the adversaries seem to be symbols of the most important neighbors of Yehud, who now, in

[103] See Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 283-366, esp. 363-365; and Heckl, Neuanfang und Kontinuität in Jerusalem.

[104] On the opposition of Nehemiah's building campaign in Ezra-Nehemiah and the historical background see Knoppers, Jews and Samaritans, 135-168.

[105] See Grätz, The Adversaries in Ezra/Nehemiah, 73–88.

[106] See Wright, Rebuilding Identity.

[107] See Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 284-301 for the details.

[108] Kratz, Statthalter, Hohepriester und Schreiber, 104; Grätz, The Adversaries in Ezra/Nehemiah, 73–88, esp. 81f; Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 314-323.327-331 (here with further literature).

the Hellenistic narrative act concertedly against the people of Judah and its representatives.[109] The reworking of Neh 1-6 may have caused the interpolation of Ezr 4:1ff into the context Ezr 1-6*.[110] The Samarian objections and accusations surrounding the restauration of the Second temple in the (in itself multi-layered) addition of Ezr 4:1-24[111] in the context of the temple restauration narrative Ezr 5-6* portray Samarian-Judean conflicts of the Hellenistic times. As Lux convincingly pointed out, the time of the temple restauration (and the delay of the temple construction) was caused by *inner* conflicts (see Haggai/Zechariah),[112] not by external factors (like the intervention by the Samarian officials in Ezr 4,6ff). It seems, that with the interpolation of Esr 4* the temple building narrative has "in mind the denial of the legitimacy of the temple on Mt Gerizim."[113] The Samarians, represented by their officials (Ezr 4,7ff) are characterized as acting *against* the Judean people (Ezr 4,1) and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. On the other hand, the Second temple on Mt. Zion is stylized as *the only one* that is commanded to be built by both, god (Ezr 1:2.7;5:1;6:14) and the Persian emperor (Ezr 6:14), and it is granted its legitimate dignity by the continuity of the place (Ezr 3:3.6.7) and its cult devices (Ezr 1:7-11;6:5) – all these attributes are denied to the Samarian sanctuary according to Ezr 1-6.

The post-Deuteronomistic addition in 2 Kings 17:24-41, with even its original core being anti-Samaritan,[114] cyphers with the mentioning of Bethel (v. 28) and the building of the *one* (בְּבֵית

[109] Finkelstein proposed an even later (Hasmonean) dating of the theme of the three named adversaries, Finkelstein, Nehemiah's Adversaries: a Hasmonaean Reality?, 47-55.

[110] This has been argued by Eskenazi, In an Age of Prose, esp. 79; and Edelman, The Origins of the 'Second' Temple, 194.

[111] In detail on this see Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 284-301.

[112] See, Lux, Der König als Tempelbauer; 99–122; idem, Der zweite Tempel von Jerusalem – ein persisches oder prophetisches Projekt?, 145–172.

[113] Heckl, Remembering Jacob, 73.

[114] See Kartveit, The Date of II Reg 17,24–41, 31–44; Knoppers, Cutheans or Children of Jacob?, esp. 238f; Hensel, 382-384; idem, Das JHWH-Heiligtum am Garizim, 82-90.

הַבָּמוֹת; note the singular in MT,[115] despite the plural used in most modern translations) cult high (v. 29.32) and its illegitimate priesthood (v. 32) a severe critique of the sanctuary on Mt. Gerizim.[116] The whole passage may stem from the (late) Persian period (Knoppers, Kartveit), or from the early Hellenistic period, which I tend to assume based on linguistic observations and the literary interdependencies with Ezra-Nehemiah.

Furthermore, Chronicles strongly favor Jerusalem as center of Israel and of the whole world.[117] The often-attested openness towards the Samaritan Yahwists, inviting the North coming and worshipping in Jerusalem,[118] is – as I have shown elsewhere – also *anti-*

[115] The singular of the phrasing is quite unusual (only here and in 1 Kings 12:13). Common is the plural בָּתֵּי הַבָּמוֹת (e.g., 1 Kings 13:32; 2 Kings 23:19). The LXX adjusts therefore te singular in 2 Kings 17:29 and 1 Kings 12:13 to the plural.

[116] See Hensel, Das JHWH-Heiligtum am Garizim, 89f.

[117] See Kartveit, The Temple of Jerusalem as the Centre of the Affairs in the Book of Chronicles, 229-242; Nihan, Cult Centralization and the Torah Traditions in Chronicles, 253-288.

[118] It was particularly emphasized in the work of Willi, Die Chronik als Auslegung; Williamson, Israel in the Books of Chronicles; Braun, A Reconsideration of the Chronicler's Attitude toward the North, 59–62; Japhet: (1993) I & II Chronicles. A Commentary; (2002/2003): 1/2 Chronik. HThKAT; (2006): People and the Land in the Restoration Period, 96–116; (20013): The Supposed Common Authorship of Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah Investigated Anew (= 1968, 330–371); Hausmann, Israels Rest and Diebner, Im Spannungsfeld zwischen Judäa und Samarien, 33–66, esp. 53–55) that the following view was held: the Chronicles advocated the concept of an "all-Israel" (Williamson, Israel in the Books of Chronicles, 98f.108–110.120.125–131) or "pan-Israel" (Japhet, People and the Land in the Restoration Peiod, 118). There is also mention of a "concept of inclusive Israel" (Weingart, Stämmevolk – Staatsvolk – Gottesvolk?, 99). These various terms use different foci to stress that in the narrative of the Chronicles, the North – and therefore also Samaria at the time of the Persians – was widely held to be part of a broader "Israel", even as the centre of "Israelite identity" remained – in accordance with its Judean authorship – in Judah, with Jerusalem as its cultic centre. Accordingly, whilst the Chronicles do occasionally take a critical stance, they never engage in polemic against the YHWH worshippers in the North. Research has tended first and foremost to stress the virtually "missionary" interest of the Chronicler in the North, together with his fundamental openness towards the YHWH worshippers in the North, esp. Williamson stresses this openness towards the North, in idem, Israel in the Books of Chronicles, 87–140.

Samaritan, as it totally neglects the existence of the major Yahwistic center in the North in post-exilic times.[119] There may also be a possible, coded polemic reference to Mt. Gerizim in 2 Chr 13.[120] With the majority of recent scholars I tend to date the origin of the Book of Chronicles in the 4th or 3rd century BCE,[121] with a preference for the later date.

An even later reworking in favor of the Jerusalem temple would be the change in Deut 27:4 from "Gerizim" to "Ebal" in the Judean traditions, which is then taken up by the even later addition of Joshua 8:30-35 MT.[122] The change in Deut 27:4 effectively dismisses the positive connotation of the altar building on Mt. Gerizim in Dtn 27 and the concessions made towards the Samarian worshippers, when Deut 27 was added to Deuteronomy 12-26.28*. The change is made *after* the main redaction of the Torah. As I have explored before[123] the replacement of Mt. Gerizim by Mt. Ebal may have happened in the context of the parting of the ways of the Samarian and Judean groups in the 2nd century BCE; but this is also probable at an earlier point in the Hellenistic period, when the Samarian-Judean relations began to sour.

The anti-Samarian change of Mt. Gerizim/Mt. Ebal could be interconnected with the change from the past tense בחר (Qatal) in reference to the "chosen place" in Deut 12 and in the centralization formula[124] to the formula's future in the MT (יבחר/Q). Schenker has shown that the use of the past tense is supported by Greek manuscripts, which are unrelated to the Samaritan traditions, which

[119] Hensel, The Chronicler's Concept of Polemics (forthcoming). On other aspects of anti-Samaritan polemics in Chronicles see Nihan, Cult Centralization and the Torah Traditions in Chronicles, 275-282.

[120] On this see Hensel, The Chronicler's Concept of Polemics (forthcoming), and (the argument in a shortened version) in idem, Das JHWH-Heiligtum am Garizim, 90-92).

[121] For a brief discussion of the dating see Nihan, Cult Centralization and the Torah Traditions in Chronicles, 259.

[122] On Joshua 8:30-35 see Nihan, The Torah between Samaria and Judah, 217-222; for the secondary character of Joshua 8 cf. Müller, The Altar on Mount Gerizim, 214.

[123] See Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 244f.

[124] Deut 12:5.11.14.18.21.26; 14:23.24.25; 15:20; 16:2.6.7.11.15.16; 17:8.10; 18:6; 26:2; 31:11.

may reflect the original reading of Deuteronomy.[125] The original past tense allows the identification of the further unnamed *Maqom* with either Jerusalem or Mt. Gerizim – in my view the name of the one Maqom was purposely left open as the whole Tora is a Samarian-Judean Compromise document. The later change to the future tense in the Judean textual tradition makes it very clear that only Jerusalem is the chosen place as יבחר points *explicitly* to the election of Jerusalem and Juda reported – outside Deuteronomy (and the whole Tora, where Jerusalem isn't mentioned[126]) – in Sam and 1/2 Kings.[127] Jerusalem is exclusively interpreted as "the place that I will choose" – Mt. Gerizim is de-legitimized.[128]

Taking this evidence together two major observations could be drawn: (1) There is a difference in the perception of Mt. Gerizim in the Pentateuch and the other predominantly Judean scriptures (Nebi'im and Ketubim). The Pentateuchal texts (especially the Priestly writings and Deuteronomy) are of a seemingly concessive nature regarding the Northern cultic place. It may be the case that most of the Pentateuchal traditions *favor* in different ways the Southern cultic traditions and Jerusalem. This perspective may stem from the (possible but controversially debated) Southern origins of the Priestly Writings and Deuteronomy. But the general observation holds true: the Jerusalem temple is in no place of the

[125] See Schenker, Le Seigneur, 339–351; idem, Textgeschichtliches zum Samaritanischen Pentateuch, 105–121; cf. Schorch, The Samaritan Version of Deuteronomy and the Origin of Deuteronomy, 23–37.

[126] The general notion that the central place in Deuteronomy is unnamed and therefore is not necessarily to be identified with Mt. Zion/Jerusalem has been legitimately stressed in the last couple of years, the e.g., Berge, Are There Centres and Peripheries in Deuteronomy?, 181-195; Nihan, Cult Centralization and the Torah Traditions in Chronicles, 254f; Müller, The Altar on Mount Gerizim (Deuteronomy 27:1-8), 197f; Hagedorn, Placing (a) God, 192-195; Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 176-183.

[127] See e.g., 1 Kings 14,21; cf. Ps 78,68, or the election of the Dynasty of David, king of Juda in Jerusalem.

[128] On the hermeneutics of the changes from בחר to יבחר see my preliminary considerations in Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 244-247, together with 179-183. I will address this problem in a forthcoming article, especially how the textual changes interact with the unnamed *Maqom* in Deut 12 and the redactional additions of Deut 27* (and Deut 11,29f).

Pentateuch seen as the *exclusivist representation* of the one legitimate Yahwistic sanctuary. This is by the way also the case for Mt. Gerizim. Both sanctuaries could be understood as the legitimate sanctuaries by their respective Yahwistic groups – but not (yet) in an exclusivist way. The Pentateuch is in this sense a compromise document. It represents the *status quo* of the late Persian period, when the redaction and publication of the Pentateuch was finalized.[129] The picture is totally different outside the Pentateuch. Polemic perceptions of Mt. Gerizim can only be found there (2 Kings, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles). It is only much later that the critical notion of Mt. Gerizim articulated in these writings leads to the changes of the (already finished) Pentateuch (Deut 27:4 Gerizim/Ebal; יבחר/בחר). (2) This last point leads to the second observation. A shift in the perception of the Samarian Sanctuary seems to have taken place somewhere in the late Persian and/or early Hellenistic period. Whereas one could speak of a "concessive mainstream" in the earlier Persian period, which is expressed in the Common Pentateuch, from the 4th century onwards (or the early 3rd; depending on how one dates the specific polemical texts) more and more critical voices are being heard within the biblical literature. This implies a significant shift in the notion of Mt. Gerizim amongst several Judean scribal groups. These observations correlate with a general notion of Samarian-Judean conflicts that developed at the same time. As I have shown in my recent study on the Samarian-Judean relationship in post-exilic times,[130] the evidences containing polemic texts, and therefore implying conflicts between Judah and Samaria, date mostly to the Hellenistic period. The non-biblical texts are *dating shortly before* and *into* the Hasmonean period[131] and are probably therefore influenced by the

[129] See, e.g. Nihan, The Emergence of the Pentateuch as "Torah", 353–364.

[130] On the following see my "Juda und Samaria" for the details; my forthcoming article "On the Relationship of Juda and Samaria in Post-Exilic Times" draws on (and in some cases revises) the main theses from this study.

[131] Amongst the oldest (possible) witnesses for anti-Samaritan polemics are certain fragments from Qumran and diverse Jewish literature form the 2nd/1st century BCE The texts in question are 4Q371–373 and also, due to its potential mention of "Kuthaeans", the Aramaic version of the Book of Esther 4Qpr Est ar^{d}, as well as the Aramaic fragments of the Testament of Levi 4QLevi^{b}; additionally

aftermath of the expansionist policies of John Hyrcanus I., and the resultant differentiation between Samaritans and Jews. As the sources of these conflicts are concentrated in the Hellenistic period, it can be surmised that it was in this period that the conflicts began to unfold. That being said, the *open conflicts* of the Hellenistic period could have – and here I am slightly adjusting datings from my previous works – are most likely to originate from the late Persian period (4th century). Seeing that the biblical evidences witness different polemical traditions and therefore different redactional circles, the critical notion towards the Samarian sanctuary could have circulated among Judean scribal groups *before* it actually resulted in a more conflict driven Samarian-Judean relationship in the Hellenistic times. This period led to a more and more negative perception of the Northern sanctuary in Judean literature and ultimately meant the end of the Common Pentateuch. It is commonly thought that somewhere in the 2nd/early 1st century BCE the Samarian and Judean groups started their parting of the ways. Most likely the events surrounding the destruction of the Samarian temple ultimately lead to Samarians and Judeans parting ways.[132] Each group added (probably starting with the 3rd century) a group-specific textual layer to their version of the Tora in this process. The Judean layers (which later lead to the Masoretic texts) included (amongst other things) the textual changes of Deut 27:4 Gerizim/Ebal and the change from בחר to יבחר.[133] The Samarian layer

relevant polemics are found in the fragments of Theodotus' works (2nd–1st century B.C.), as handed down via Alexander Polyhistor in Eusebius, Praeparatio Evangelica 9,22; Testament of Levi 5–7; Jub 30 and Ps-Philo, Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum 8,7f; Joseph and Aseneth 23,1–15 and Philo, De migratione Abrahami 1,224. A comprehensive discussion (with literature) of the texts in Kartveit, The Origin of the Samaritans, 109–201. Pummer already compiled the most important critical points in this discussion in an article published in 1982, see Pummer, Antisamaritanische Polemik, 224–242; updated in the context of the more recent discussion, his arguments can also be found in Pummer, The Samaritans in Flavius Josephus, 18–23.

[132] See on this Schorch, Construction of Samari(t)an Identity, 135–149; Dexinger, Ursprung, 67–140; Pummer, Antisamaritanische Polemik, 224f; Knoppers, Jews and Samaritans, 172-174, and Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 231-255.

[133] See Dušek, Inscriptions, 94f; see also Hensel, Juda und Samaria, 241-247 for a detailed discussion of this process.

expands the 10 commandments, by adding after Exod 20,17 and Deut 5:18 a Mélange of texts taken from Exod 13:11a, Deut 11,29b; 27:2b-3b.4a (SamP).5-7,[134] which all emphasize the legitimacy of Mt. Gerizim as the place that YHWH has chosen. The concessive character of the Pentateuch was thus given up. Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Zion respectively were interpreted as the only legitimate representation of the one cultic place in Israel. The Hasmonean destruction of Mt. Gerizim is a tangible manifestation of this interpretation process.

The historical background that lead to this critical perspective on the other Yahwistic center may have been the transitional period of the 4th and third century and the uncertainties following the transition from the Persian to the Ptolemaic and then Seleucid rule.[135] The fact that from the Ptolemaic period onwards the Judean and Samarian communities were for the first time part of one administrative district ("Syria and Phoinike" or "Coele-Syria") may have played a major role in this development.[136] Accordingly, from the Ptolemaic time onwards, there were suddenly two YHWH-sanctuaries *inside* the province's borders. This is referenced indirectly in 2 Macc 5:22f, in which the cultic communities in Jerusalem and on Mt. Gerizim are seen as being the same γένος (v.22): that is, as different cultic centres of *the same* religious community or ethnic group within the single province of Coele-Syria.[137] Because the sanctuaries – like any other sanctuary in the times of antiquity – not only served as a place of cultic practice but also enjoyed various privileges, such as tax exemptions and other financial concessions that went along with the running of a temple,[138] one could imagine that both Yahwistic groups were competing for

[134] See Pummer, The Samaritans in Flavius Josephus, 25f for a discussion of the text.

[135] For the details see my Juda und Samaria, 218-229.

[136] On the history of the province, see Bringmann, Geschichte der Juden im Altertum, 72–85.

[137] Grabbe formulates this as follows: "To an outsider, especially, they must have looked indistinguishable. Antiochus's order suppressing Jewish worship must therefore have delivered the same blow to the Shechemites as to the Jews." (Grabbe, Betwixt and Between, 206).

[138] On the temple tax and associated fiscal issues, see Zangenberg, The Sanctuary on Mount Gerizim, 408-410; Sasse, Geschichte Israels, 104–107.

the privileges and financial support of the Hellenistic government and thereby existing in a state of rivalry. The support of the temple of Jerusalem by Antiochus III. is reported by Flavius Josephus in the letter of Antiochus III in Jos. *Ant.* 12.138–144. The comprehensive renovation and expansion works undertaken on Mt. Gerizim took place exactly during the period of transition from Ptolemaic to Seleucid rule.[139] This cannot be explained without the support and protection of the Hellenistic administration. These works must have significantly increased the "competitive pressure" on Mt. Gerizim's neighbouring religious centre in Jerusalem.

Concluding remarks

Which provisional conclusions and viewpoints can now be articulated regarding the question of regional centralization in the Persian Period?

(1) It has become obvious, looking at the sources from Persian times, that the Samarian Yahwists had a central YHWH-sanctuary on the main peak of Mt. Gerizim. The different Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek inscriptions found in the vicinity of the sanctuary, but also the ones brought to light in more distant locations like Delos, may indicate that the Samarian temple was the main sanctuary not only for the region around Shechem and Mt. Gerizim, but for the Persian province as a whole and even across its borders. The findings of the much later Seleucid period, especially around 200 BCE (most of the Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek inscriptions – if not all of them[140] – seem to have been carved during this time; both the sanctuary and the sacred precinct were rebuilt significantly) indicate that the Samarian cultic center was of major significance for the Seleucid rulers, just in the same way Jerusalem and Mt. Zion were for the Judeans.

(2) It is not entirely clear if there were any other Samarian shrines, altars or temples in Samaria or abroad. But since archeo-

[139] For this excellent observation see Dušek, Inscriptions, 3f.
[140] Dušek, Inscriptions, *passim*.

logical findings are scant, their existence is not very likely. However, if Bethel was not completely destroyed after the Assyrian conquest, as Knauf and others claim,[141] and functioned as a sort of interim sanctuary for the Judeans, why should this former Northern sanctuary have served as a *Southern* sanctuary after 722 BCE? Granted, the archaeological evidences speak against the possibility of any post-722 BCE activities in Bethel. Also in the light of the re-evaluations of the archaeological findings done by Finkelstein and Singer-Avitz this thesis of Knauf may not hold ground, as there seems to be not much settlement activities in the village of Bethel in 6th-4th BCE.[142] On the other hand, if we follow Lipschits in his most recent assessment of the Bethel sanctuary,[143] there seems to be fresh ground for discussion. Lipschits' first conclusion is on the methodology:

> "Even experienced archaeologists cannot achieve a reliable archaeological picture of the history of the site based on the archaeological evidence from Bethel; on this basis alone we cannot achieve an independent, dependable historical picture. The main problem with the archaeological material concerns the periods that are also problematic from the historical perspective, and in the case of the Babylonian, Persian, and Early Hellenistic periods, it seems that the textual evidence is essential for illuminating the historical reality in a better way than simply base it on the interpretation of the archaeological material."[144]

What Lipschits criticizes here rightfully is the methodological *Prae* of the archaeological material in re-constructing the history of the

[141] See Knauf, Bethel: The Israelite Impact on Judean Language and Literature, 291–349; idem, The Glorious Days of Manasseh, 273; Knauf/Guillaume, A History of Biblical Israel, 172.188-190; for an adaptation of Knauf's thesis, connecting it with the literary growth of the Jacob-cycle see, Becker, Jakob in Bethel und Sichem, 159-185; see also Valkama, What Do Archaeological Remains Reveal of the Settlements in Judah, 39-59; Davies, Monotheism, Empire, and the Cult(s) of Yehud in the Persian Period, 31-33.

[142] Finkelstein/Singer-Avitz, Reevaluating Bethel, 33-48; see also Jericke, Die Ortsangaben im Buch Genesis, 95-97.

[143] See Lipschits, Bethel Revisited, 233-245.

[144] Lipschits, Bethel Revisited, 243.

site. The literary place of "Bethel" in the biblical tradition is rather complicated and cannot be reduced to the historical anchor point of a Northern Israelite Sanctuary in the Iron Age II A/B.[145] The most important observation Lipschits mentions in his article is however a series of new excavations and findings. According to Lipschits the Bethel sanctuary was located on a site outside the village of Bethel, only a few hundred meters to the east of the village.[146] It is the highest hill in the area around Bethel (the size was estimated to be about 3 dunams).[147] This place was dismissed as a possible location of the sanctuary of Bethel earlier by Finkelstein. However, a new survey (2015) on this site shows a completely different picture. The survey team around Tavgar has found a set of structures and Iron Age II pottery on the top of the hill. As Lipschits reports, in the excavations of this site in the summer season of 2016 even more Iron Age II pottery was found.[148] Further excavations and publications can be expected at this – as Lipschits calls it – "best candidate to be identified as the cult place of Bethel."[149] Maybe the archaeological evidences could change the picture. Until their publication only preliminary conclusions can be drawn. If one tends to assume that Bethel was intact in the time after the downfall of the Northern kingdom and even in the Babylonian Era, why should it not have stayed a Northern sanctuary? One major insight of the Samaritan research of the last couple of years has been that the Samarian Yahwists were not completely wiped out after their kingdom's downfall – just as the Judeans were not some 150 years later.[150] If the Bethel sanctuary of the Assyrian, later Babylonian and then Persian province of Samaria was active, we would have found a location for the production and transmission of "Northern" literature and the various contacts and scribal interactions between Samarian and Judean Yahwists to take place *after* the downfall of the

[145] See Jericke, Die Ortsangaben im Buch Genesis, 95-97 for an overview of the location and its *Wirkungsgeschichte* in biblical literature and beyond.

[146] Lipschits, Bethel Revisited, esp. 242-244.

[147] See Finkelstein/Singer-Avitz, Reevaluating Bethel, 43.

[148] See Lipschits, Bethel Revisited, 243.

[149] Lipschits, Bethel Revisited, 243.

[150] See the works of Knoppers and Hensel cited in the introduction of chap. I. above.

Northern and Southern monarchy. In the 5th century Mt. Gerizim became of course the Samarian center – maybe since Bethel was destroyed as Davies speculates?[151] The assumption of a still active Bethel sanctuary would also explain why the place name "Bethel" was used as a cypher for the Judean critique on Mt. Gerizim in the post-Deuteronomistic addition 2 Kings 24:24-41 (here: v. 29) and in 2 Chr 13.

(3) Another point open for discussion is the possible existence of a Samarian temple mentioned on the Greek inscription of the sundial found at Mt. Gerizim, dated somewhere around the 4th-2nd century BCE. The existence of a sanctuary or holy place outside Samaria would not question the general assumption of a centralization of cult *inside* the Samarian province. In fact, the inscription itself bears the notion that the Samarian sanctuary is considered the *main* cultic site, where the offering is sent from Egypt.

(4) Having identified Mt. Gerizim as at least one actual other Yahwistic center, other evidence shows that the Judean and Samarian communities were not torn apart by bitter rivalries in the beginning of the post-exilic period. The Pentateuch, which was finalized in the late Persian period, reflects the concessive perception of the Samarian sanctuary by the Judean group(s). Within the Pentateuch there are *no texts* that point to an exclusivist understanding of the *one* cultic place either Mt. Zion (this concessive nature also applies to the Samarian group that had the same Pentateuch) or Mt. Gerizim.

(5) However, a growing number of critical and/or polemical texts from the 4th or/and 3rd century BCE demonstrate that in the late Persian period the perception of the Northern sanctuary was turning increasingly negative. Certain traditions like Deut 12 and related texts were interpreted in a sense that Jerusalem was the only legitimate representation of the *Maqom* chosen by YHWH.

[151] Davies, Monotheism, Empire, and the Cult(s) of Yehud in the Persian Period, 32 gives no further information or evidences why he thinks the Bethel sanctuary was destroyed.

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