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“The Place that YHWH your God Has Chosen”?
The Centralization of Cult and its Impact on
Jewish-Samaritan Relations

Master Thesis of:

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Abstract

The origin of Samaritans and their relationship with Judaism has been a subject of interest because of their similarities and the apparent conflict between the two groups supposedly existing since Ancient times. The place of worship is at the center of the controversy, whether it should be Jerusalem or Gerizim is one of the main differences between them. Scholarly positions vary regarding the moment, causes, and process of separation between the two communities, but all of them agree on the importance of Gerizim's temple or their rupture. In recent years, the archaeological surveys in Mount Gerizim and the discovery and study of different contemporary texts (such as the Dead Sea Scrolls or the Wadi Daliyeh papyri) have provided new data for the study of the subject. The present thesis makes use of these discoveries and analyses three key elements for understanding the origin of Samaritans and the nature of their relationship with the Jews: the people, the temple, and the Torah. The analysis of these three components will show the parallel evolution of two communities with similar origins and with a relationship fluctuating between collaboration and mutual discrediting.

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Introduction

Samaritans are one of the smallest religious communities in the world. Nowadays, they are concentrated in two settlements: the Neve Pinchas quarter of Holon in Israel and the village of Kiryat Luza in the Palestinian Territories. Their number is estimated at around 800 persons.¹ One of the most important differences with Judaism is that their place of worship, instead of Jerusalem, is Mount Gerizim, where they still perform sacrificial rites. Because of its presence in the northern territories of Palestine since ancient times and the apparent similarities with Jewish beliefs and traditions, the date and reasons of the schism between them have been a matter of discussion.

One possible explanation is that the split happened during the Persian period. It was during this period that both temples (Jerusalem and Gerizim) were built. Defenders of this date claim that the reason for the schism was the construction of a Samaritan Temple, which competed with the one in Jerusalem.² Even though several biblical passages written during the Persian period attest a significant concern on the separation of the community from outsiders, and also point towards a Jerusalemite centrality, several examples of texts addressing the northern population can also be found. These various positions might indicate that conflict between the two communities existed, but they did not imply a mutual discrediting. Also, the emergence of the Torah as an authoritative text, today placed during the Persian period, thus, after the construction of both temples, supports the idea of continuous relations between them. It does not seem then that the construction of the Gerizim temple alone should have caused a deep schism.

If we rule out an irreconcilable rupture due to the construction of the temple, a second option is to place the schism during the Hasmonean period as a consequence of the Gerizim temple's destruction. In his *Jewish War* (1.63), Flavius

¹ Reinhard Pummer, *The Samaritans: A Profile* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), p.194.

² Magnar Kartveit, *The Origin of the Samaritans*, Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, V. 128 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 351-370.

Josephus recounts the destruction of the city of Shechem and the Temple of Mount Gerizim by John Hyrcanus as part of his military campaign against the territories of Transjordan, Idumaea, and Samaria. The excavations on Gerizim have proved that, indeed, the temple and its surroundings were destroyed a few years before the end of the 2nd century BCE;³ however, the reasons for their destruction are not entirely clear.

The central conflict between them was the place where the temple had to be placed. However, this might not have been a reason for conflict at the beginning if both temples co-existed in relative peace. When Judeans brought back the idea of centralization on Jerusalem's Temple during the Hasmonean period and turned it into an essential element, according to this hypothesis, they tried to impose this condition on the Samaritans. In response, the Samaritans adopted the same exclusive idea but linked it with their Temple at Gerizim. When the attempts of assimilation failed, the second option was repudiation.

The present thesis starts with two premises. The first is the common origin of the Jewish and Samaritan religions. That is, both groups were part of a larger heterogeneous population that shared similar practices, traditions, history, and even texts. With this, we intend to call in question the discussion about whether Samaritanism was a sect of Judaism⁴ or the original Israelite religion.⁵ We will focus on passages from the books of Kings (2Kings 17:24-34), Chronicles and, Nehemiah (Neh. 13:28-30), Ezra (Ezra 4:1-2) from the Hebrew Bible. And from Flavius Josephus (Ant. 9.288-291; 11.110).

The second premise is the co-existence of two different temples where YHWH was worshiped and their tense but on-going relations. In the second chapter, we will examine the impact of the Persian Empire on the territories of Samaria and Judea.

³ Ingrid Hjelm, "Mt. Gerizim and Samaritans in Recent Research," in *Samaritans: Past and Present: Current Studies*, Menachem Mor and Friederich V. Reiterer (Eds.) (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), p. 28.

⁴ James D. Purvis, *The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Origin of the Samaritan Sect*, Harvard Semitic Monographs, V. 2. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968),

⁵ Etienne Nodet, "Israelites, Samaritans, Temples, Jews," in *Samaria, Samaritans, Samaritans*, József Zsengellér (Ed.), Studies on Bible, History and Linguistics, Berlin, (Boston: De Gruyter, 2011),

We will see how the construction of the temples in Jerusalem and Gerizim was the result of the Persian conquest of Babylon and the return of the Judean elite from the exile. With the help of archaeological studies and textual references, we will try to clarify the nature of both communities and the situation of their relationship.

In the last chapter, we will explore the notion of the centralization of cult and what the versions of the Pentateuch (MT and SP) say about this issue. We will see that the ambiguity of the texts regarding the place where YHWH should be worshiped played a vital role in the relationship of the Gerizim and Jerusalem communities during the times of the compilation of the Torah. Within this context, we will analyze the different readings of Deuteronomy 12 and 27:4-5. Finally, we will explore the impact of the Hasmonean period on the Samaritan-Judean relations resulting in significant changes, including the Samaritan addition to Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.

1. The Lost Tribes of Israel

The destruction of Samaria and the transformation of Israel into an Assyrian province is one of the most trans events in Jewish history. The second book of Kings tells us that “in the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria; he carried the Israelites away to Assyria. He placed them in Halah, on the Habor, the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes” (17:6). After a long list of actions committed by Israel against Yahweh’s commandments, the text affirms that “therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight; none was left but the tribe of Judah alone” (17:18). This story, as we will see later, is supported by Assyrian sources and has prompted several discussions about the fate of the Israelites deported as well as claims of belonging to these lost tribes from several groups. Still, the Assyrians did not merely depopulate the territory. According to the biblical text, after the expulsion of the Israelites, the land was occupied by a foreign population brought from distant regions of the Assyrian empire (2 Kings 17:24).

The traditional Jewish position about the origin of Samaritans is grounded precisely in this event. Flavius Josephus provides one of the most ancient testimonies of this position. In his writings, he denies more than once any ethnic bonds between Judeans and Samaritans; instead, he claims that these people were, in fact, descendants of those foreign peoples brought by the Assyrians. Opposed to this postulate, we have the Samaritan claim of real Israelite descent, and, according to their Chronicles, the split occurred even before the fall of Israel, in the time of the prophet Eli.⁶ Several scholars have also questioned the notion of a complete disintegration of the so-called ten northern tribes of Israel; according to them, the origin of the Samaritans should be considered descendants of the remaining Israelites.⁷

⁶ Oliver Turnbull (Trad.), *The Samaritan Chronicle* (New York: John B. Alden Publishers, 1890)

⁷ Gary N. Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans: The Origins and History of Their Early Relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Nodet, "Israelites, Samaritans, Temples, Jews."

In this chapter, we will address these two positions. The matter in question is the ethnic origin of the Samaritans and the possible impact of Israel's destruction by the Assyrians on it. The chapter is divided into four sections. First, we will approach the discussions around the ethnogenesis of the "Israelite people." It is very often assumed that, even if we can cast some doubts on the existence of twelve Israelite tribes, at least we can rely on the information given by the Bible regarding the monarchy times and take for granted the existence of an early single political and cultural entity. We will explore the positions of scholars who deny the reliability of biblical texts for this period. Second, we will briefly address the rise and fall of the kingdom of Israel, contrasting the information provided by the biblical text with other ancient sources and modern studies. In the third section, we will discuss the situation of the Israelite population that remained in Samaria and its relation with Judah and analyze the accounts given in 2Kings 17 and Josephus' version of the Samaritans' origin. And last, we will explore the different terms proposed to refer to the groups inhabiting the Assyrian province of Samaria.

1.1. Two Peoples One God

When talking about the people of Israel, it is inevitable to think of twelve tribes. Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, we find several allusions to this division and, influenced by these books, also in art, music, literature, and all kind of cultural expressions.

The first time we find a mention of twelve descendants of Israel is in Genesis, which lists the twelve sons of Israel (Gen. 35:23-26). When his death is near, Jacob/Israel addresses each of his sons in a sort of prophetic last will, and we read for the first time that "all these are the twelve tribes of Israel" (Gen. 49:1-27). During the Exodus story references to the twelve tribes are made continuously as the form of organization of the people and their decision making (Num. 1:16; 7:2; 10:4; 13:2; 31:4), as symbolic representations in cultic objects such as altars (Ex. 24:4), vestments (Ex. 28:21; 39:14), and in plans for the distribution of the land (Num. 26:55;

33:54; 36:7). Once they arrived in Canaan, according to the book of Joshua, each tribe received its portion of the land as the conquest advanced (Josh. 12:7; 13:7; 14; 18:2; 19:51). From this moment, the tribes of Israel lived in their new land, but there was no king or central government, and the guidance of the people corresponded to the tribal leaders.

The climax of the story comes with the rise of the monarchy. Saul, from the tribe of Benjamin, was anointed king of Israel by the prophet Samuel (1Sam. 10:1, 20-24). However, after he sinned and deviated from Yahweh's commandments (1Sam. 15:11, 26-28), a new king was chosen: David (1Sam. 16:13), first as king over Judah (2Sam. 2:4) and then over all Israel (2Sam. 5:3).

The ethnogenesis of Judah and Israel—that is to say, how a human group differentiated itself from others becoming a socio-cultural unit—has been a matter of discussion among scholars. Some regard the Bible as the primary source for understanding this process and hold that events narrated in it have to be considered as fact, at least in a general way. This view would mean that a process of evolution in socio-economic and political structures occurred, turning some sort of league formed by tribes of semi-nomadic people into a highly centralized monarchy under the rule of David and Solomon, which later suffered dissension and gave birth to the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Over the last decades, however, archaeological surveys have brought to light the migrational processes that occurred at the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age, raising questions of the biblical texts.

According to scholars such as Mario Liverani,⁸ Israel Finkelstein, and Neil Silberman,⁹ during the Bronze Age, Canaan's highlands were a landscape with a symbiotic society integrated by sedentary and nomadic groups. As long as the Canaanite city-states existed, the relationship between farmers and nomadic shepherds was stable. However, when the Canaanite system collapsed at the end of the Late Bronze, the exchange of surplus disappeared, forcing the highland

⁸ Mario Liverani, *Más Allá de la Biblia. Historia Antigua de Israel* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2005).

⁹ Israel Finkelstein y Neil Silberman, *La Biblia Desenterrada. Una Nueva Visión Arqueológica del Antiguo Israel y de sus Textos Sagrados* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2011).

shepherds to assume the production of their agricultural consumption and starting a process of transition from transhumance to a sedentary life¹⁰. The fall of the system of city-states and the withdrawal of the great international powers from the region left a panorama made up of a fragmented group of cities complemented by small agro-pastoral tribal entities, which generated political entities through a formative process in a period between the 10th and 9th centuries.

The highlands present a dual panorama: a more fertile zone in the north formed by a mosaic of valleys nestled between the adjacent hillsides, and a less productive region isolated by topographic and climatic barriers in the south.¹¹ These geographical characteristics conditioned the formation of two city-states during the Late Bronze Age: the northern region controlled by Shechem and the southern by Jerusalem. Moreover, archaeological evidence also indicates that migratory waves to the highlands followed the same pattern by always forming two different entities, one more densely populated with widespread agriculture in the north, and another less populated and more dedicated to grazing in the south.¹²

In this reconstruction, the crisis of the palatine system brought with it the settlement and sedentarization of pastoral groups, giving rise to a relationship between the remaining urban elements and the new tribal elements that would end up turning towards the supremacy of the tribal groups. Even though the process of settling was similar in both southern and northern regions, the pre-existence of two differentiated urban societies—one around Shechem and the other in Jerusalem—and the different geographical conditions might have influenced the conformation of two separate social and political entities: Israel and Judah.¹³

Regarding the monarchy's founders (Saul, David, and Solomon), although their existence cannot be denied entirely, their unifying rule over all Israel and the greatness attributed to its governments have been questioned. The kingdom of Saul

¹⁰ Finkelstein and Silberman, *La Biblia Desenterrada*, 116-121.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 174.

¹² Liverani, *Más Allá de la Biblia*, p. 171.

¹³ Finkelstein and Silberman, *La Biblia Desenterrada*, pp. 149-151.

was probably formed around the year 1000 BCE in the border area between Jerusalem and Shechem in the territory associated traditionally to the tribes of Ephraim and Benjamin, and it was more a charismatic leadership than a kingdom. The same can be said of the reigns of David and Solomon, whose kingdom was also formed as a charismatic leadership probably parallel to Saul's, in the territory corresponding to the tribe of Judah. In this regard, Liverani suggests a possible unification of these three tribes (Benjamin, Ephraim, and Judah) and a subsequent breakup,¹⁴ while Finkelstein and Silberman deny the existence of a unified monarchy.¹⁵

Although the worship of Yahweh was probably introduced by the semi-nomadic herders who formed the peoples of Israel and Judah, their cultic practices were not so different from the ones from other peoples in the region. In Assmann's words: "that which the Bible presents as a relapse towards paganism must be understood as the normal and official religion of Israel."¹⁶ There existed several gods whom they worshipped and various rites and agricultural festivities that were performed all over the territory. The cult was limited to the veneration of sacred sites called *bamoth* (במות), of stone *stela*e or wooden posts called *masseboth* (מצבות), and the performance of sacrifices as well as seasonal sacred celebrations following agrarian cycles. Also, there were temples closely linked with the monarchies, usually located near the palace, and with no political purposes or activities on their own; their priests were part of the royal court, and their importance relied on the role played in ceremonies and festivities practiced.¹⁷

We can say that in Samaria and all Israel, a plurality of cults reigned. Baal was nothing but the typology of the traditional divinity of the country, along with Astarte and Asherah. There were both Baal and Yahweh temples and prophets; also,

¹⁴ Liverani, *Más allá de la Biblia*, pp. 105-120.

¹⁵ Finkelstein and Silberman, *La Biblia Desenterrada*, p. 153-155; see also, *David and Solomon, In search of the Bible's Sacred Kings and the Roots of the Western Tradition* (New York: Free Press, 2007); and, Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom: The Archaeology and History of Northern Israel*. Ancient Near East Monographs, Vol. 5 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), 2013).

¹⁶ Jan Assmann, *Monoteísmo y violencia*, Fragmentos 28 (España: Fragmenta Editorial, 2014), p. 44.

¹⁷ Liverani, *Más allá de la Biblia*, p. 390.

there were other modest places, of local scope and extra-urban location, for the worship and altars for ritual sacrifices. For Judah, the situation was not different. Religious practice was varied, geographically decentralized, and not only reduced to a Yawhistic cult associated mainly with the temple linked to the royal palace and the ruling dynasty. Instead, much of the population performed fertility rites and outdoor sacrifices at the *bamoth* and *masseboth* mentioned above.

Neither textual nor archaeological proofs sustain the biblical narrative of twelve tribes coming from Egypt and conquering the land of Canaan to form a kind of inter-tribal league or an empire like the one described for Davidic and Solomonic times. Instead, all archaeological surveys and a variety of studies of the period create many doubts about biblical claims regarding the Israelites' origin and their historical development. Although the later existence of Israel and Judah is undeniable, scholars have posed questions about the existence of a monarchy reigning over both territories as a unified kingdom, arguing the presence of two differentiated entities from the process of ethnogenesis to the fall of Israel. However, these scholars also point to several elements shared by both groups namely their process of settlement, traditions such as the abstention of pork, and, most important, the worship of a god called Yahweh (יהוה). Nevertheless, the cult of Yahweh was neither exclusive nor homogeneous.

1.2. The Fall of the Northern Kingdom

According to the Biblical text, after the great rule of Solomon, a period depicted as the golden age of Israel, the kingdom was divided in two in retaliation for Solomon's sins (1Kings 11:31-32). Once Solomon died, the northern tribes rebelled against his son Rehoboam and chose Jeroboam as their king; from this point, the book of Kings continues relating to the history of both kingdoms in parallel. Two points are noteworthy here. First, concerns about the worship of other gods besides Yahweh and the existence of different sanctuaries and *bamoth* (characteristic of the Deuteronomist redaction) is evident throughout the book, and even though the book

raises accusations against Israelite and Judahite kings, it is primarily the people and kings of Israel the ones who are depicted as apostates. Second, this text provides significantly more information regarding Israel than Judah.

In the first section, we have seen that the existence of the twelve tribes and a united kingdom is difficult to prove; instead, some scholars propose the existence of two entities with the same process of ethnogenesis. Despite having similar elements with the neighboring kingdom of Judah, such as the worship of Yahweh (יהוה) as a national but not unique god, the relationship between them was always tense with apparent domination by the Israelite kingdom, given its more favorable geographical and political conditions.

The kingdom of Israel reached its maximum splendor under the Omride dynasty (vilified by the sacred texts) between the years 884 and 842 BCE. The arrival of Omri to the throne and the creation of his new capital Samaria (2Kings 16:23-24)¹⁸ represented a turning point in the development of Israel. The abundance of resources, thanks to the fertile lands capable of producing mainly olive groves and vineyards,¹⁹ the revival of trade in the eastern Mediterranean,²⁰ and the presence of other political entities such as Aram-Damascus and Moab boosted construction activity and the rise of a complex administrative structure. Inscriptions also indicate that they were able to maintain a military force, and participated actively in the international politics of the area.²¹

The buoyant economy and the development of an administrative structure not only permitted an internal development but also led to territorial expansion. All these had an impact on the configuration of Israel's population, which, according to modern calculations, reached a total of 350.000²² by the end of the eighth century BCE and was the most populous entity in the region.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

¹⁹ Finkelstein and Silberman, *La Biblia desenterrada*, pp. 180-181; Liverani, *Más Allá de la Biblia*, pp. 120-123.

²⁰ Finkelstein and Silberman, *La Biblia desenterrada*, pp. 213-216.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 195-199.

²² Finkelstein, *The Forgotten Kingdom*, p. 110

As we can see, despite being described as an apostate kingdom, the archaeological remains indicate that Israel was an economic, political, and military power of the region during the first half of the eighth century BCE. However, during the second half of the century, Assyrians entered the scene.

Shalmaneser III (858-824 BCE) implemented new expansionist policies and launched an attack on Syro-Palestine polities, which formed a coalition and confronted the Assyrian army in the battle of Qarqar.²³ From this moment, inscriptions show Israelite kings, such as Yehu²⁴ and Yehoash²⁵ paying tribute to Shalmaneser and Adad-nirari, respectively. In 811 BCE Adad-nirari III besieged Damascus, and, being unable to withstand the Assyrian power, the Arameans ended up submitting along with other political entities in the region.²⁶ The defeat of Damascus in 800 BCE brought with it a period of stability under the rule of Assyria. Once the Assyrians achieved control of the region, military incursions were rare.²⁷ The kingdom of Israel, as a vassal, was part of the Assyrian economic network, occupied some of the territories to the north lost by Damascus (Dan, Bethsaida), and boosted the cultivation of vineyards and olive groves.²⁸

Israel, under the rule of Pekah (737-732 BCE), tried to end submission by forming a coalition with other local powers to confront the Assyrians; this coalition failed. Tiglath-Pileser III invaded the region, annexed Aram-Damascus in 732 BCE to the Assyrian empire,²⁹ and reduced the kingdom of Israel significantly, which suffered the loss of Galilee and Gilead in 734-733 BCE and the destruction of its most important cities.

²³ A. Kirk Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC. II (858-745 BC)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), p. 23.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 48

²⁵ Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers*, p. 211

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.213

²⁷ Liverani, *Más Allá de la Biblia*, p.171.

²⁸ Finkelstein and Silberman, *La Biblia Desenterrada*, p. 194.

²⁹ Hayim Tadmor, Shigeo Yamada, and Jamie R. Novotny, *The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III (744-727 BC) and Shalmaneser V (726-722 BC), Kings of Assyria* (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2011), p. 105.

The surviving kingdom of Israel, reduced now to the mountains surrounding Samaria, came under the rule of Hoshea who, despite being put in by Tiglath-Pileser III for his cooperation in Israel's submission,³⁰ suspended payment of the tribute and tried to ally with Egypt for help in a fight against the Assyrians. Shalmaneser V launched a campaign against Israel and besieged Samaria, which fell in 721 at the hands of his successor Sargon II, completely obliterating what was left of the kingdom of Israel.

Assyrian conquests followed a pattern, which, according to Zsengellér, can be explained in four steps. The first step consisted in turning the new territories into Assyrian vassals and imposing the payment of tribute; we already saw how Assyrian annals attest the payment of tribute by Israel. The second was the installation of a puppet-king as occurred with the appointment of Hoshea after Pekah's rebellion. Then, if rebellion continued, the territory was invaded, its cities were destroyed, and its population deported. Finally, it was turned into an Assyrian province.³¹

Now, what about these last two stages mentioned by Zsengellér? The book of Kings relates that:

The people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile to Assyria, and they are still there. The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Kuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites. They took over Samaria and lived in its towns. (2Kings 17:23b-24)

It is in this text that all the later mentions of the exile of the ten lost tribes of Israel and their substitution with foreign peoples are grounded. But, how reliable are the biblical sources? And, how did these deportations work to form a new Assyrian province finally? The Assyrian system of deportations has been widely studied, and, according to several scholars, this policy and its differences with the Babylonian

³⁰ Tadmor, *et al.*, *Royal Inscriptions*, p. 106.

³¹ József Zsengellér, *Gerizim As Israel : Northern Tradition of the Old Testament and the Early History of the Samaritans*, Dissertation (Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid, Universiteit Utrecht, 1998), pp. 96-97.

deportations had a significant influence on the development of early Judaism.³² As the text presents it, the system consisted of two processes: deportation and importation; this means that they are not unidirectional but that a population from another region replaced the deported population.

Destruction of cities and deportation of their population carried out by the Assyrians were part of terror propaganda; they were exemplary lessons of what will happen to those who rebelled against them. But they also aimed at the destabilization of internal political and social organizational structures. Deportation of the elite in charge of political and economic administration, as well as the military organization, deprived the newly conquered territories of the necessary circuits for any response against domination.³³ Even though the book of Kings does not provide us with an exact number of people taken, there are several Assyrian documents relating the campaigns against Samaria and reporting the number of prisoners dragged out of their land. The first campaign against Samaria, led by Tiglath-Pileser III, it is said to have deported between 800³⁴ and 13.500.³⁵ For the second and definitive military incursion, two texts give a similar number of people deported: the inscription of Sargon from Chorsabad reports 27.290, while the Calah Prism 27.280.³⁶

And yet, the intention was not to rule over completely desolated and highly unproductive territories. As already mentioned, the introduction of groups brought from other regions followed these deportations. The repopulation intended to eliminate the resistance of the deportees favoring their assimilation to the Assyrian provinces, and to prevent economic stagnation in the devastated areas, thus annihilating cultural individuality without the region collapsing economically and demographically.³⁷ This is a maximalist position of the destruction of the kingdom of

³² Liverani, *Más allá de la Biblia*, pp. 232-2342.

³³ Jean-Daniel Macchi, *Les Samaritains: Histoire D'une Légende; Israël Et La Province De Samarie*,. Le Monde De La Bible, No 30 (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1994), p. 98.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

³⁵ Liverani, *Más Allá de la Biblia*, p.173; Finkelstein and Silberman, *La Biblia Desenterrada*, p. 202.

³⁶ Zsengellér, *Gerizim As Israel*, p. 101.

³⁷ Liverani, *Más Allá de la Biblia*, p. 179.

Israel, grounded mainly in written sources but also in archaeological surveys. Supporters of this perspective do not claim a complete depopulation of Israelites but that they were absorbed by the new population brought by the Assyrians³⁸

From a minimalist perspective, the damage caused by the Assyrians was of limited duration and focused on urban centers; this is grounded mainly on other biblical texts apart from Kings. Allusions to the northern population of Israel in other biblical books such as Chronicles and several prophets, as well as the surviving of a Hebrew dialect, are the more persuasive arguments for a reconsideration of the maximalist position. However, says Knoppers, the claims of small deportation directed mainly to the elites do not have any further evidence that the assumption of an exaggeration in the Assyrian texts.³⁹ This affirmation is far from being accurate. According to Finkelstein and Silberman, even if we consider the Assyrian numbers, the exchange of population was not complete. The total number of deportees was around forty thousand. If we consider an estimated population of 350.000, the number of deportees represented less than a fifth. While destruction occurred mainly in the administrative centers, the rural population was left in their territories as long as they would not rise against the empire and kept paying tribute. Thus, the vast majority of Israelites remained in the country, and the real impact of the deportations and importations was minimal.⁴⁰

While maximalist positions, represented well enough by Josephus' *Antiquities* and defended by scholars such as Liverani, argue for a considerable impact on the remaining population and its conversion into a mixture of cultures, minimalist views claim that Israel was not wholly depopulated and those who remained continued with their traditions and cult. On the one hand, the maximalist position might be mistaken in taking for granted the supposition of a massive exchange of population, which led to the cultural mixture ending with the integration of the Israelites into the new peoples. On the other hand, minimalist positions do no better by minimizing the

³⁸ Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, p. 25.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.30.

⁴⁰ Finkelstein and Silberman, *La Biblia Desenterrada*, p. 205.

effects of the Assyrian deportations' system on the configuration of the population. Biblical narratives about the removal of Israelite people have been confirmed by non-biblical texts and archaeological surveys, which attest indeed that a significant number of Israelites were driven out of their land, and other peoples were brought to it. However, other Biblical accounts, and the same archaeological remains, also hint at the existence of a remaining Israelite population with which the kingdom of Judah and its population continued to relate.⁴¹

1.3. Those who remained

How do the Assyrian conquest of Israel and the deportation of its population relate to our subject? For Jewish tradition, Samaritans originated from the peoples imported after the Israelites' deportation. This tradition follows a biblical interpretation made by Josephus in his *Antiquities*. According to him, after the new peoples settled in Samaria suffered from a pestilence sent by God, Israelite priests were sent for teaching them the "ordinances and religion of his God" which were still practiced "among those who are called *Chūthaioi* in the Hebrew tongue, and *Samareitai* by the Greeks" (*Ant.* 9.288-291). Josephus' account is based on the biblical description contained in the book of kings (2Kings 17:24-41) with slight but significant differences.

Even though 2Kings 17:24-41 is no longer considered a historical account of the Samaritans' origin, as a result of the interpretation given by Josephus, it has been thought that the biblical passage presents a controversial attitude towards Samaritans. In a recent article, Magnar Kartveit analyses the passage and arrives at three conclusions. First, according to him, "the use of verbal and nominal constructions with a participle, the lists of place names for the origin of the imported

⁴¹ Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, p. 38.

people and the list of their gods point towards a late origin,”⁴² probably during the Persian period. Second, he argues that the passage polemicizes against a contemporary northern group which claimed to be of Israelite descent and “attacks them with two arguments, first their alleged foreign origin and syncretism, and then for breaching the covenant laid upon Israel.”⁴³ Finally, according to Kartveit, Josephus continued the anti-Samaritan discourse contained in the Persian period additions to the book of Kings.

However, an anti-Samaritan intention of his text, as suggested by Kartveit, presents a critical problem: there is no sign of syncretism among Samaritans. The modern community of Samaritans is, in some respects, more conservative than the majority of today’s Jews, but this orthodoxy is not only attested in modern times. The excavations conducted in Mount Gerizim have not found any trace of other gods’ worship besides Yahweh, and the archaeological remains point towards a strict observance of cultic precepts and sacrificial practices. Even Josephus, whose position against Samaritans cannot be denied, does not present the Samaritans as syncretistic but as zealous worshipers of Yahweh (*Ant.* 9.289).

Instead of considering an anti-Samaritan polemic, Knoppers suggests that these verses “reveal that the historical situation in northern Israel presupposed by the writers of 2 Kings 17 is more complex.”⁴⁴ The issue was the survival of native culture in a modified form within this region, a continuity of Yawhist traditions that Judahite writers tried to explain. For him, the entire passage can be divided into two parts. Verses 23-34a imply an exile of the Israelite people and the adoption of the Yawhistic traditions by the new population; on the one hand, it assumes an ethnic discontinuity and, on the other, a cultic continuity. Contrary to the latter, verses 34b-40 present a discontinuity of the traditions and the disobedience to Yahweh’s commandments and claim the brake of a covenant, even when the supposedly new

⁴²Magnar Kartveit, “Anti-Samaritan Polemics in the Hebrew Bible? The case of 2 Kings 17:24-41,” in *The Samaritans in Historical, Cultural and Linguistic Perspectives*, Jan Dusek (Ed.) (Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), p. 12

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴⁴ Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, p. 49.

people were not part of that covenant.⁴⁵ However, these verses are part of a more extensive narrative.

The narrative in Kings is based on the relation between Israel and Judah, presenting the southern dynasty of David as the legitimate ruler of both kingdoms. If the northern kingdom was conquered and its population deported, why write its history along with Judah's? The answer to this question might be the result of the Assyrian conquest.

Even though Assyrian deportations affected the whole territory, repopulation was directed towards the city of Samaria, and surroundings, especially the area between Shechem and the Jezreel Valley, where the settlements between the Late Iron and the Persian period remained unchanged. This new population probably formed the new leading stratum of the recently created Assyrian province; this does not mean a total displacement of the Israelite population. Regarding the cult, it is most likely that a Yawhistic cult prevailed and was even adopted by the new settlers.

On the other hand, the area located between Shechem and Bethel shows a decrease in its sites, going from 238 in the eighth century to 127 during the Persian period. While this area suffered a reduction in its population, Jerusalem and its surroundings showed critical growth. The number of sites in Jerusalem's southern area went from 30 in the ninth and eighth centuries BCE to more than 120 after the Assyrian conquest; in the Shephela, the settlements on this period are calculated at 276, an increase of more than ten times.⁴⁶ Finkelstein and Silberman have suggested that this demographic explosion can be explained with the immigration of northern people from the southern part of the old kingdom of Israel, especially the vicinity of Bethel.⁴⁷

At the end of the eighth century and the beginning of the seventh century BCE, Judah's situation was unique. It was the only semi-autonomous kingdom in the

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-62.

⁴⁶ Finkelstein and Silberman, *David and Solomon*, p. 135.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.137.

region, an Assyrian vassal yes, but with certain political freedom. It had a large mixed population composed of Judahites and Israelites and had a partially depopulated territory north of its borders. It is probable that among these immigrants were also members of the Israelite elite who brought with them their northern history and traditions. According to several authors, this scenario encouraged the Judahite elite to begin the writing of a national narrative that included both Judah and Israel's history but with a straightforward apology of the southern primacy over the north. This process began during the reign of Hezekiah and continued in times of Josiah with the school known as Deuteronomistic.⁴⁸

The main Deuteronomistic ideas are two: unification and election. It is the story of the people elected by their god Yahweh which has to be the only one for them. At the same time, Jerusalem, with its dynasty and temple, were selected by Yahweh to be the rulers of the whole people. According to Römer, "the concentration of religious power in Jerusalem required the cultic unification of the national deity Yahweh,"⁴⁹ and possibly the first version of Deuteronomy contained Dt. 6:4-5 followed by Dt. 12:13-18 requiring the worship of Yahweh in one place.

The rejection of other gods' worship is a recurrent issue in Deuteronomistic writings, and this has severe implications on the self-identification and separation from others. Adi Ophir and Ishay Rosen-Zvi propose that, at this first stage of the process of separation, "real otherness in Deuteronomy is only assigned explicitly to God's others, not to Israel's,"⁵⁰ which means that the real self-definition of Israel comes from its loyalty to Yahweh. However, this exclusivity of one god and one sanctuary was relatively new, and the remained population still worshiped Yahweh in the north.

While the Deuteronomistic school was trying to claim Israel's unity and its election by Yahweh in the south, part of the population in Samaria also worshiped

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142

⁴⁹ Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical, and Literary Introduction* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), p. 59.

⁵⁰ Adi Ophir and Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Goy: Israel's Multiple Others and the Birth of the Gentile* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 40.

Yahweh. Then, as Knoppers points out, the biblical text also “suggests that the practice of some form of Yahwism in the north challenged and strained a series of Deuteronomistic principles, such as the linkages among deity and geography, people and land, genealogy and nationality, ethnicity and practice.”⁵¹

It is within this context that we should read 2 Kings 17:25-34a. First, we find that Yahweh and the land are closely linked. Even though Israel was already defeated, Yahweh sent a plague to the new inhabitants because they did not worship him. As a consequence, these new peoples started worshipping Yahweh as well, but they also kept practicing other gods’ cults and continued to sacrifice in the *bamoth*. In these verses, the authors sought to explain the existence of Yawhistic traditions in the north and, at the same time, to condemn the presence of other sanctuaries.

If no anti-Samaritan intentions can be found in this chapter of the book of Kings, why did Josephus’ rewrite it as the origin of the Samaritans? In his writings, Josephus tries to present Judeans as a nation with traditions, beliefs, laws, and practices, with Jerusalem and its temple as the center of this nation or metropolis.

It has been proposed that Josephus’s writings reveal an ambiguous discourse towards Samaritans. Sung Uk Lim says that “Josephus performs a dual dynamic discourse of inclusion and exclusion in various dimensions—ethnic, geographical, political, religious and cultural—so as eventually to present Judaeans/Jewish identity in both an inclusive and exclusive relationship with the Samaritans/Samaritans.”⁵² For Feldman, one of the passages in which Josephus is ambiguous towards the origin of Samaritans is where he relates the expeditions of Alexander in Israel. In this section, after being in the temple of Jerusalem, Alexander marched against different cities of the region. One of these cities was Shechem, which, according to Josephus, “was inhabited by apostates from the Jewish nation” (*Ant.* 11.340). According to Feldman, the fact that Josephus presents the inhabitants of Shechem, who worshiped at Gerizim, as apostates of the Jewish nation, is proof that he grants them a Judean

⁵¹ Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, p. 65.

⁵² Sung Uk Lim, "Josephus Constructs the Samari(t)ans: A Strategic Construction of Judaeans/Jewish Identity through the Rhetoric of Inclusion and Exclusion," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 64, no. 2 (2013), p.406.

origin since the use of this term is always used for referring a rebel who separated from his group or nation (*Ant.* 10.222,221; 11.22,24; 14.433).⁵³ However, in a previous passage, Josephus already mentions the desertion of a group of priests and Israelites who were in a mixed marriage and how they joined Manasseh and Sanballat, who “supplied them with money and with land for cultivation and assigned them places wherein to dwell, in every way seeking to win favor for his son-in-law” (*Ant.* 11.312). Accordingly, there is no real ambiguity in Josephus’ discourse; he was just being consequent with his narrative, which at this point turned from denying their Israelite origin (only) to delegitimizing their temple and its priesthood. Another “hint” given by Feldman is the very fact of Judeans fleeing towards Samaritans when expelled from the community; these Judeans, argues, would not have chosen to join a group that had different customs and traditions. Nevertheless, here Feldman takes for granted the historicity of these events instead of recognizing Josephus’ motives behind the story.⁵⁴

According to Steve Mason, the aim of Josephus’ *Antiquities* was “to provide a handbook of Judean law, history, and culture for a Gentile audience in Rome.”⁵⁵ In order to accomplish his goals, Josephus explains the history of Judeans in familiar Greek terms such as *ethnos*. For Josephus, and probably a group of Judeans, Samaritans represented a challenge for its self-definition as a group. It was a group that not only was inhabiting within a territory that Josephus considered part of the Judean nation, but this group also shared several traditions in common with Judeans. If we read Josephus’ works with the acknowledgment of his intentions, we can identify the contrast made with Samaritans as one of the narrative lines he uses as a tool for his purposes. Also, he draws a line differentiating the two groups. We can observe that his strategy here covers two different aspects of the uttermost importance for his audience.

⁵³ Louis H. Feldman, *Studies in Hellenistic Judaism, Arbeiten Zur Geschichte Des Antiken Judentums Und Des Urchristentums* 30 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), p. 131.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁵⁵ Steve Mason, “‘Should Any Wish to Enquire Further’ (*Ant.* 1.25): The Aim and Audience of Josephus’s *Judean Antiquities/Life*,” in Steve Mason (Ed.), *Understanding Josephus: Seven Perspectives*. *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*. Supplement Series, 32. (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), p. 101.

First, there was the ethnic origin of the population; by linking Samaritans with those foreigners brought by the king of Assyria, he intends to deprive them of any claim of ethnic belonging. Traditions were part of what defined an ethnos. Samaritans shared traditions with them, not only a Yawhistic cult but also practices, laws, festivities, and even a temple-based identity and scriptural tradition grounded in the Pentateuch. The adoption of the cultic practices is explained in part with the story of the Cutheans, but, at the same time, it is denigrated as a deformed tradition with the accusation that Samaritans accepted Judeans who did not follow the laws strictly.

The second thing is closely related to the temple in Gerizim. The priestly group in charge there claimed to be of Cohanite descent just as the Jerusalemite one did, and this should have been mutually recognized since, instead of omitting this detail or denying it, Josephus tries to explain it as well. The construction of Gerizim temple, according to Josephus, is the result of a conflict among Jerusalemite priests. Some of these renegades are identified as part of the priestly elite, and this serves to cast doubts on the legitimacy of their temple despite the Aaronide descent of its priests. Josephus' strategy here is not to deny their origin; for him, the priesthood in Gerizim was of real Aronide descent, but also, it was not the legitimate line since it is the result of intermarriage.

This is important because Samaritans, as descendants of those northerners, shared with Judeans not only the Yawhistic worship and several traditions. Furthermore, they were legitimate heirs to those traditions. It was essential to distance from Samaritans not only by posing questions over the legitimacy of their temple but also by denying a common origin. After failing the complete integration of the Yawhist Samaritans into the Judean community and the mutual rejection of their temples, it was necessary to question their ethnic links. Is Josephus the result of a process that had already started several years ago? It would be a mistake to assume that Josephus' view on Samaritans is representative of Judeans' general perspective. Neither could we suggest that this narrative of opposition is entirely a Josephus' inventive. His writings made use of different sources, using them for his

purpose and testifying the exacerbation of a process of estrangement between Judeans and Samaritans.

1.4. Israelites, Samari(t)ans, Cutheans.

As we have seen and will continue to see in the subsequent chapters, the study of the early history of the Samaritans presents several difficulties regarding sources, dates, and interpretations. However, one of the most critical concerns the appropriate terminology, that is to say: what do we understand as Samaritans? Is this the correct word when referring to an ancient group? If, as some scholars propose, they are the remnant of Israel, shall we use this name for them?

We shall close this chapter by discussing the terms and how the information provided in the previous sections influences our terminological preferences.

Let us start with the most obvious and familiar: Samaritans; the standard modern way to refer to that specific religious group whose most sacred place is Mount Gerizim. The English word, as we know it, comes from the Greek Σαμαρείται, which appears in the Greek version of the Bible (LXX) a transliteration from the Hebrew השמרנים being in 2Kings 17:29, its only appearance in the Hebrew Bible. This word derives from שמרון, the capital of Israel bought from Shemer (שמר) and named after him by king Omri (2Kings 16:23-24). Then, if we go to the text and its context, this word refers to the people of Samaria. It was not until Flavius Josephus that the term was applied, as well, to refer to a specific group linked to a temple on Mount Gerizim in opposition to the one in Jerusalem.

Josephus introduces a particular word: *Χουθαῖοι*. The word is first mentioned in Josephus' *War*, where he describes them as "the race inhabiting the country surrounding the temple modeled on that at Jerusalem" (1:63) and later developed in his *Antiquities* where he links this community with the peoples brought by the Assyrians. One of those peoples mentioned in the book of Kings was from a place called Cutha (כותה); according to Kings, they adopted Israelite cult without

abandoning their gods. But Josephus uses this term along with others such as *Σαμαρείται*, *Σαμαρεῖς*, *Σικιμίται*, and *Σιδωνίων ἐν Σικίμοις*. Why, then, to add this new term? And what are its implications? Coggins points out that by linking Samaritans with the people brought from Cutha, Josephus intended to give credibility to the accusations of “heathen origins and syncretistic practices.”⁵⁶ However, even within the text of Josephus, we find several references to the strict observance of cultic practices among Samaritans. We have mentioned the goals and intended audience of Josephus’ writings and pointed out the Hellenistic framework of his entire work. Having this in mind, we agree with those who find him indiscriminate using *Σαμαρείται*, *Σαμαρεῖς*, and *Σικιμίται*, whether for literary purposes or for their lack of specificity in Josephus’ time. In regards to Cutheans, it is clear that its use has the intention to remark on their different ethnic origin as part of his elaborate agenda to present them as a contra part of Judeans. Thus, we should avoid the use of this term to refer to any specific ancient group.

Even though several authors have opted for making a distinction between Samaritans and Samaritans, the former being Yahwist religious group and the latter the ancient inhabitants of the province of Samaria, other scholars oppose this distinction. Etienne Nodet, for example, argues that Samaritans are descendants of ancient Israelites and that there was a continuity of traditions of the northern kingdom; then, since “Samaritans were ancient Israelites, such a distinction [Samaritans/Samaritans] becomes useless.”⁵⁷ In turn, Steve Mason thinks that the distinction is pointless because “the ancients did not isolate a branch of life called ‘religion’;”⁵⁸ hence when referring to the ancient use of the word, we shall use the term Samaritans meaning the people who lived in the city or the region of Samaria.

Nevertheless, as noted above, the population of Samaria was far from being homogeneous even during the Israelite monarchy period. We have indeed an ethnic

⁵⁶ R. J. Coggins, *Samaritans and Jews: The Origins of Samaritanism Reconsidered*, Growing Points in Theology (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975), p. 10.

⁵⁷ Nodet, "Israelites, Samaritans, Temples, Jews," p. 123.

⁵⁸ Steve Mason, *Flavius Josephus: Translation and Commentary*, Volume 1B: Judean War 2, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2008), 189.

group descended from those semi-nomadic shepherd groups, recognizable by their Yahwistic traditions, which later constituted both Judah and Israel, from which a group will evolve until it becomes today's Samaritans inhabiting the province of Samaria with other peoples. Because of this situation, Reinhard Pummer proposes to make use of three different names: Samaritans are those who consider Mount Gerizim as the only legitimate place of worship, Samaritans are the inhabitants of the city and province of Samaria, and proto-Samaritans those Yahweh worshipping Samaritans.⁵⁹ A further difference can be made: from the proto-Samaritans, a group started to worship at Mount Gerizim and, as Kartveit points out, the temple of Gerizim was a factor of identity for the Samaritan community,⁶⁰ thus, from this point, we could consider a new group to emerge: the pre-Samaritans.

Even though it is important to have in mind this process of development of identity, in the present thesis, we will make use of three terms: Samaritans for the modern religious group that considers Gerizim a sacred place, Samaritans for the population that inhabited the ancient province of Samaria, and, Samaritan Yahwists for the population in Samaria that kept Yahwistic traditions.

2. The Temples of YHWH

⁵⁹ Pummer, *A Profile*, p. 7.

⁶⁰ Kartveit, *Origin of the Samaritans*, p. 351.

When people talk about Judaism, Jews, the people of Israel, or Yahweh, it is inevitable to refer to Jerusalem and its temple located at the center of what we called Jewish religion. It is also commonly accepted that the temple of Jerusalem was the right and proper place for the worship of Yahweh. One of the most considerable differences between Samaritans and Jews is precisely that, while Jews consider Jerusalem to be the only place where the temple for Yahweh should stand, Samaritans maintain that Gerizim is the chosen place for Yahweh's altar. This significant difference has been considered the reason for the split between these two religious groups, whether it was because of the construction of a temple on Gerizim or because of its destruction.

In this chapter, we will explore the process of construction of both temples and the historical context framing this process. The matter in question here is, on the one hand, the reasons, dates, and characteristics of these temples and, on the other, the relationship between the Yawhistic communities in Samaria and Judea.

2.1. The Reconstruction of Jerusalem's Temple

The kingdom of Judah had completely different development and outcome than its northern neighbor. In comparison to Israel, the territory occupied by the kingdom of Judah was marginal, isolated, rural, and located afar from the main trade routes of those times⁶¹. Even though the supremacy of Jerusalem already existed at the beginning of the Iron Age as a main urban center, the palace and temple played a minor role in the life of the population,⁶² and it had an economy mainly focused on self-sufficient production. This limited economic capacity, its relative international isolation, and its delay in the development of more complex administrative structures

⁶¹ Lester Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period. Vol. 1, The Persian Period (539-331BCE)*, Library of Second Temple Studies, 47 (London: T&T Clark, 2005), p. 264.

⁶² Finkelstein and Silberman, *Biblia Desenterrada*, pp. 262-263.

was an advantage the face of the Assyrian expansion since it did not represent any economic asset nor a military and political menace.

After the destruction of Damascus and Israel at the hands of the Assyrians, Judah became a vassal kingdom surrounded by new Assyrian provinces. This situation permitted the modest kingdom of the south and its capital Jerusalem, with its small royal court and its temple associated with the palace, to develop and expand itself until it became the center of regional power.

It has been suggested that the immigration of Israelites, some of them probably part of the elites, might have boosted Judah's organizational and intellectual development.⁶³ The strengthening of Judah and its royal house, as well as the maturing of new ideological trends, are reflected in two alleged reformist periods: the first during the rule of King Hezekiah⁶⁴ (c. 739-687 BCE), and the second led by King Josiah (c. 640-609 BCE). Both reforms will be discussed in the next chapter.

After Josiah's death, his son Jehoiakim succeeded him and, even though he was a tributary of Babylon, decided to rebel, causing Jerusalem to be besieged (2Kings 24:1). However, he died, and Jehoiachin, his successor, decided to capitulate. The Babylonians deported him along with his family and the ruling class (2Kings 24:8-17), plundered the treasures of the temple, and left Zedekiah as a vassal king who also rebelled. Nebuchadnezzar again besieged Jerusalem in 589 BCE, and after two years, captured Zedekiah. The Babylonians took the city, burned down the temple and the palace, destroyed the walls, and part of the population was deported (2Kings 25). Unlike the Assyrians, the Babylonians limited themselves to transferring the population out of Judah; they introduced no foreign population. The Babylonians were content to abandon the conquered lands leaving them in a state of degradation while also allowing the elite and deported urban population to retain their Judahite identity.⁶⁵

⁶³ Finkelstein and Silberman, *David and Solomon*, pp. 134-138.

⁶⁴ Grabbe, *Jews and Judaism vol 1*, p. 265.

⁶⁵ Liverani, *Más Allá de la Biblia*, pp. 232-233,

After a hundred years of Babylonian rule, in the middle of the sixth century BCE, the Achaemenid Empire began to grow, and in 539 BE Cyrus the Great invaded Babylon and absorbed all the provinces and territories controlled by the Neo-Babylonian Empire. These events had a profound impact on the remains of the old kingdom of Judah and its population exiled in Babylon.

According to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, after the Persian conquest of Babylon, a process of reconstruction began for the Judahite people led by groups of exile returnees; these books give an account of the situation in Palestine during this process of restoration. They show the return of exiles in several waves, place in different times and with different leaderships. Ezra 2 and Neh. 7 relate the arrival of thousands of Jews to Jerusalem. However, there are no archaeological proofs of this, nor textual source that speaks about extensive policies for the resettlement of lands. Probably, the immigration of returnees occurred during several decades in small groups.⁶⁶

Concerning the temple, Grabbe considers essential for understanding the concerns of the returnees to have in mind that "the center of worship in Palestine was the temple cult, and the focus of this was the sacrifices on the altar."⁶⁷ Nodet claims that the temple-centered cult is entirely an innovation brought from Babylon and that, even for the first wave of returnees, the building of a temple was not necessary for carrying out the cultic practices.⁶⁸ Even though these two positions might seem like opposites, they represent two different traditions that can be dated to the times of the monarchy. We should not forget the tradition of the high places and the local shrines and altars where people also performed their sacrifices, but, along with this more popular cult, there are also proofs for the existence of more spacious sanctuaries. Josiah's reforms were an attempt to eliminate the traditions of the high places favoring the temple-centered cult. Even though archaeological surveys have shown the destruction of cultic places in Arad Beer-sheba and Lachish,⁶⁹ it is questionable

⁶⁶ Grabbe, *Jews and Judaism vol 1*, p. 274.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

⁶⁸ Nodet, "Israelites, Samaritans, Temples, Jews," pp. 123-129.

⁶⁹ Finkelstein and Silberman, *David and Solomon*, pp. 285-288.

whether these reforms achieved the destruction of all the high places and if the population accepted them. According to Nodet, the first group of returnees and the local Israelites had in common the practice of sacrificial cult without a temple, and he mentions “two parallel sanctuaries without temples at Jerusalem and Gerizim.”⁷⁰ But, if there were no need of a temple, and both Israelite groups considered possible the offering in other places, it is probable that, after the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians, the remained population kept practicing their sacrificial cult until a group of returnees began the construction of a new temple (Jer. 41:5-6).

However, this new temple might have been slightly different from the one existing in the kingdom of Judah. As we briefly mentioned in the first chapter, the characteristics of the temples during the monarchic period differed significantly from those we can reconstruct during the Persian period. The temple and its priesthood were closely linked with the palace and its ruling monarch, among other things they served as an agent of legitimization of the dynasty securing the people’s adhesion. Also, they ruled the cultic life of the kingdom, taking care of the sacrificial rituals, festivals, and maintenance of the temple. In contrast, Liverani argues that the exiles got in touch with different kinds of temples in Babylon, which were redistributive centers. Besides their monumental size as houses of the gods, they also had other facilities such as storehouses, workshops, residences, and schools, and were run by the priestly class and scribes who, in principal cities, played an important economic role.⁷¹ Another significant point is the tax exemption granted by the Babylonian and Persian kings to certain city-temples. The returnees that went back to Judea brought this model of the temple more independent from a monarchy and very useful for the relationship with the Persian authorities.

Usually, the date given for the reconstruction of the temple, based on literary accounts, is 516 BCE. However, as Grabbe notes, the socio-economic reality of the province of Judah might pose some questions about such an early and prompt rebuilding; for him, the date was more likely around 500 BCE or the first years of the

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁷¹ Liverani, *Más Allá de la Biblia*, pp. 390-391.

fifth century BCE.⁷² The books of Ezra and Nehemiah attest to the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple during this period. According to the biblical narrative, the Persian authorities not only permitted but encouraged and even financed the temple's rebuilding (Ezra 1:2-4; 13:5-15; 6:3-5,8-12). These claims have raised several questions among scholars about the Persian authorities' involvement in the building of a Temple in Jerusalem.

The Cyrus Cylinder and the Babylonian Chronicles give an account of the return of several gods to their abandoned temples during the reign of Cyrus, which seem to confirm the biblical version of Cyrus' permission to rebuild Jerusalem's temple. However, Grabbe accuses an exaggeration in modern studies of the Persian "religious policies" that allegedly supported local cults. For him, Persian kings launched a propagandistic campaign to present themselves as pious and attendant to the gods' will, and they were open to local petitions as long as the cults did not pose any threat to them or inspire seditious plans. All of this, of course, did not mean specific patronage of any cult or the encouragement for the reestablishment of ancient local cults as the biblical accounts might suggest.⁷³ A Persian general policy of return and reconstruction of ruined sacred sites might have taken place after Cyrus acceded to the throne, and the decree contained in Ezra 1:2-4 was probably a Judean re-elaboration of a more general edict. The similarities between the text in Isaiah 44-45 and the cylinder are remarkable, making patent the biblical re-elaboration of Persian documents.⁷⁴

The only archaeological remains of the temple are the ones from the Herodian temple, which might have had its foundations on the temple built in the Persian period. Since the Herodian renovation occurred during the Roman period, and we have more textual sources for this period, we can be sure of two things. The first is the physical structure of this temple, which is the characteristics of its wall and the

⁷² Grabbe, *Jews and Judaism vol 1*, p. 284-285.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁷⁴ Thomas Römer, "Conflicting Models of Identity and the Publication of the Torah in the Persian Period," In *Between Cooperation and Hostility: Multiple Identities in Ancient Judaism and the Interaction with Foreign Powers*, Rainer Albertz and Jakob Wöhrle (Eds.), *Journal of Ancient Judaism. Supplements*, 11 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), p. 37.

access doors, the different courtyards for gentiles and women, the inner yard with the altar, and the temple internally divided into the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies (Ex. 4; Lev 1:3-4;11; Temple Scroll, Ezekiel). The second thing is that it was controlled by a hierarchical priestly group, which gained an important role in the ruling of Jerusalem. Even though the office of High Priest might have existed since the time of the Judahite monarchy, there is no reliable information about its exact functions during that period. Then, during the Persian Period, Judah was deprived of their monarchs, and “all the evidence indicates that the office of high priest expanded in importance over some time to fill the gap of local leadership.”⁷⁵

2.2. The Construction of Gerizim’s Temple

Mount Gerizim is located south of the modern city of Nablus, in the area known as the West Bank. Together with Mount Ebal, located north of the city, are the two highest peaks in Samaria: 886 and 938 meters above sea level. They flank the place where the biblical city of Shechem, now Tell Balatah, was located. According to the Samaritan Pentateuch version of the Ten Commandments, it is on this mountain where the altar to Yahweh shall be built. However, the command of building an altar does not necessarily imply the construction of a Temple; Samaritan sources are silent regarding the temple on Mount Gerizim. Only Abu’l-Fath, a fourteenth-century BCE Samaritan Chronicler, mentions the building of the temple by the high priest Abdal.⁷⁶ Besides this text, other Samaritan sources speak only about only an altar for the sacrifices in front of the tabernacle. According to Pummer, it could be concluded either that there was never a temple or its existence was suppressed for ideological interests.⁷⁷ Based on this Samaritan silence, some scholars formerly

⁷⁵ Grabbe, *Jews and Judaism vol 2*, p. 231.

⁷⁶ Paul Stenhouse (Trans.), *The Kitāb al-Tarīkh of Abu 'l-Fath* (Sidney: Mandelbaum Trust, University of Sidney, 1985), pp. 95-96.

⁷⁷ Reinhard Pummer, “Samaritan Material Remains and Archaeology,” in *The Samaritans*, Alan David Crown, (Tübingen: Mohr, 1989), p. 172.

questioned the existence of a Temple,⁷⁸ claiming that “there is no certainty that a temple has ever existed on Mount Gerizim.”⁷⁹

The only ancient text that gives an account of the construction of a temple in Mount Gerizim is Josephus' *Antiquities*. According to this source, Samaritans built this temple in the transition times from the Persian to the Hellenistic periods. The story says that, during the times of Darius, Jaddus and his brother Manasseh shared the high priesthood in Jerusalem, and the latter was married to a foreigner: the daughter of Sanballat, the Samaritan governor. To prevent his daughter from being divorced, Sanballat promised Manasseh to build a temple on Gerizim and appoint him High Priest (*Ant.* 11:310-311). Josephus gives this temple an important antagonistic place in his writings where he relates its construction (*Ant.* 11:321-324, 310-311, 342; 13:256), several polemics raised by the legitimacy of both temples in the Diaspora (*Ant.* 12:7-10, 257-264; 13:74-79), and its destruction by John Hyrcanus (*Ant.* 13:254-256; *War.* 1:62).

Nevertheless, other historical sources also support the importance of Gerizim and the existence of a temple. Deuteronomy speaks of Gerizim as the mount of the blessings, without mentioning any shrine or altar (Dt 11:29; 27:12). The Book of Maccabees mentions the temple in Gerizim in similar conditions as the one in Jerusalem when facing Antiochus Epiphanes' new regulations (2Macc. 5:22-23; 6:2). The inscriptions found in Delos⁸⁰ also support the existence of a Temple in Gerizim.

The excavations conducted by Yitzhak Magen since 1982, have brought light to several questions posed around the establishment of a temple on Mount Gerizim. Expeditions unearthed three different groups of buildings on the top of the mountain from at least three different periods. On the northern end of the hill, were found the

⁷⁸ Yizhaq Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*. Vol. II. *A Temple City*, Judea and Samaria Publications (Jsp), 8. Jerusalem: Staff Officer of Archaeology, Civil Administration for Judea and Samaria: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2008), p. 151; Coggins, *Samaritans and Jews*, p. 172.

⁷⁹ Zsellénger, *Gerizim as Israel*, p. 150.

⁸⁰ Philippe Bruneau and Pierre Bordreuil, “Les Israélites de Délos et la juiverie délienne,” in *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*, Volume 106, livraison 1, (1982), pp. 465-504.

remains of a temple dedicated to Zeus Hypsistos built during the Roman period. On the center range, Magen discovered the remains of buildings from the Hellenistic and Persian periods grouped in two different areas: what he calls The Precinct located on the top, and The City located south of it.⁸¹

The city excavated on the top of the mountain has a total area of 400 dunams, being significantly larger than the area occupied by The Precinct, which covers 30 dunams. The stony soil and absence of water springs, natural conditions of the hill which do not favor the establishment of a large city, led Magen to conclude that the city was founded on religious motives and grew as an extension of the Sacred Precinct. The town lacked proper urban planning, and the dwelling complexes, along with the public and commercial buildings, seem to have been conceived with the administration of the temple in mind. Only the sacred Precinct appears to be appropriately planned. According to Magen, this might hint a lack of secular leadership, remarking the cultic nature of the city. The cultic nature of the city makes clear that, politically, the city of Hargerizim was inferior to Jerusalem. While Jerusalem was the capital of the province of Yehud, the capital of the northern province was Samaria; Gerizim and Shechem were smaller towns within it.⁸²

According to Magen, the construction of the city began during the Hellenistic period, being the southern quarter one of the first areas developed after the sacred Precinct and dated to the beginning of the Ptolemaic period. The distribution of the rooms in the complexes followed a Hellenistic style that entered the land of Israel after the Greek conquest.⁸³ Even though there is some architectural influence, the surveys also show resistance to Hellenism, and it is probable that “Greek culture and paganism did not penetrate the city, despite allusions to the contrary in Josephus and the Books of the Maccabees.”⁸⁴

⁸¹ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*. Vol. II, p. 3.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

Regarding the Precinct, the excavations unearthed the archaeological remains belonging mainly to a surrounding wall and various adjacent buildings. The reconstructions made by Magen show an area surrounded by a wall with three access doors on the North, South, and West sides. These remains show two different stages of construction, especially the west side, where the walls of the two-phase construction are visible.⁸⁵ Furthermore, it is evident that the second stage corresponds to an expansion of the first, especially on the north and west sides, as well as a possible opening of the wall by eliminating the door on the south side towards the city.

The discovery of ceramics belonging to the Persian period (the vast majority found in the area of the Precinct), coins from the fifth and fourth centuries BCE and the carbon-14 examinations of bones and wood belonging to the first-phase strata led Magen to date the first phase of construction to the Persian period in the first half of the fifth century BCE.⁸⁶ The expansion carried out in the second phase of construction was dated to the reign of Antiochus around 200 BCE and its destruction by Hyrcanus to 111-110 BCE.

According to Magen, the temple was built by Sanballat the Horonite to unite Samaritans in the face of Jerusalem's threat.⁸⁷ Menahem Mor questions Magen's conclusions. According to Mor, the archaeological finds on which Magen based his arguments do not support his thesis. First, the inscriptions found in the Precinct were dated by Magen in the Hellenistic period between the third and second centuries BCE; therefore, they cannot serve as proof for an earlier date. Second, it is difficult to claim the possibility of finding significant differences in pottery in such a short period as 100 years weakening this premise. And third, from the 14.000 coins found only seventy-two date to the Persian period. Mor also points out how Magen rejects Josephus as a historical account for the dating of the temple's building, but

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 112

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 167-169.

⁸⁷ Yitzhak Magen, "The Dating of the First Phase of the Samaritan Temple," in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B. C. E.*, Oded Lipschitz, *et al.* (Eds.) (Winona Lake: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), pp. 187-189.

he uses the same story only set in a previous period. For Mor, the temple on Mount Gerizim was built at some moment between the fall of the Persian kingdom and Alexander's conquest of Palestine.⁸⁸

Even though Magen's historical reconstruction using Josephus' account and placing it in times of Nehemiah might be mistaken, the archaeological evidence supports the early date proposed by him. In his article, Mor discards the pottery and coins as sufficient proofs, but he ignores the architectural remains that show different phases of construction, as well as the stratigraphic levels, found in between these two phases. Also, since the natural conditions on top of the mountain do not favor the existence of a human settlement, it would remain to answer what was the nature of the first phase structures. Furthermore, the Delos inscriptions from the first half of the second century BCE confirm the existence of a group that identifies itself as those Israelites "who send (offerings) to Argarizein" not only in Palestine but also in the diaspora. For this situation to exist, as Kartveit points out, the process of identification with Gerizim must have occurred sometime before expanding to the diaspora, making difficult the late date suggested by Mor.⁸⁹

The question of whether these buildings were part of a cultic complex for Yahweh can also be solved with Magen's findings. Even though the construction of the Byzantine church destroyed the area the temple and the altar are thought to have been, the site known as the "Twelve Stones," situated between the western walls of the sacred Precinct and the walls of the Byzantine church, might be part of the temple's structure. The stone-dressing method of this structure differs from both the Persian and Hellenistic walls, which leads Magen to conclude that it should be part of the first phase of construction of the Persian temple. Magen suggests that this site constituted the western wall of the temple and probably the one covering the Holy of

⁸⁸ Menahem Mor, "The Building of the Samaritan Temple and the Samaritan Governors –Again," in *Samaria, Samaritans, Samaritans*, József Zsengellér (Ed.), Studies on Bible, History and Linguistics (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2011), pp. 89-108.

⁸⁹ Kartveit, *Origins of the Samaritans*, p. 153.

Holies, which explains why it remained after the rebuilding of the temple during the Hellenistic period.⁹⁰

Another important finding was a large number of inscriptions. These inscriptions show fragments of dedication formulas in Neo-Hebrew and Aramaic. Three things should be noted from these inscriptions. First, the characteristics of the stones, the fact that only one inscription is found in each stone, and the few grammatical errors indicate that they were not spontaneous writings from passersby; instead, they were regulated by the temple authorities.⁹¹ The basic dedication formula reconstructed by Magen is the following:

That which offered PN son of PN (from GN) for himself, his wife, and his sons
for good remembrance before God in this place
זי הקרב פלוני (מן מקום פלני) על נפשה אל אנתתה ואל בנוהי לדכרן טב קדם אלהא באתרא דנה

Second, the use of different languages and scripts reflect differentiation between the priestly class and the rest. Even though the neo-Hebrew inscriptions were considerably fewer, the scripts suggest that these were made by priests, mentioned as the ones who offer in inscriptions no. 382, 388, and 389. Also, the tetragrammaton Yahweh (יהוה) was only found in inscription 383, in New-Hebrew script, while the Aramaic inscriptions make use of the more general term Eloha (אלהא). Two inscriptions (no. 150 and 151) written in Hebrew present Adonai (אדני) instead of Yahweh. This difference might be because the proto-Jewish script was used and not Neo-Hebrew, which probably was considered as a holy script used only by the priests.⁹²

And last, even though the vast majority of the inscriptions refer to the offerings as presented “in this place” (באתרא דנה), there is one explicit mention of a temple in inscription no.150 concluding with the phrase “Before the Lord in the **temple** (דני [לפני אד]במקדש).” There is also an explicit mention of sacrifice being performed in his

⁹⁰ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*. Vol. II, p. 114.

⁹¹ Yizhaq Magen, et al., *Mount Gerizim Excavations*, Vol. I, *The Aramaic, Hebrew and Samaritan Inscriptions*, Judea and Samaria Publications (Jsp), 2, (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2004), p. 12.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

place: inscription no. 199 refers to bulls being sacrificed at the “house of sacrifice” (בבית דבחא).

Another matter of discussion has been the temple’s design and its probable similarities with the one in Jerusalem. Josephus states that the Precinct of Mount Gerizim was built following the model of the temple of Jerusalem (*Ant.* 11.310). Addressing this question is difficult because of the lack of information available on both of them. On the one hand, textual sources referring to Gerizim are minimal, reduced almost entirely to the already mentioned fragment of Josephus’ work. Besides, the construction of the Byzantine church significantly damaged the actual temple building. On the other hand, it is not possible to know the exact distribution of the temple in Jerusalem. Textual sources, both biblical and non-biblical, differ between them and could also be biased descriptions subject of modifications and exaggerations with ideological purposes. Additionally, the current political and social situation in Jerusalem joined to the location of the Mosque of the Dome on the Temple Mount makes it difficult, if not impossible, to perform excavations in the area.

Magen tries to find the connection between both temples by comparing the information provided mainly by Ezekiel and the Temple Scroll, but also Flavius Josephus, the Mishnah, and others. He finds a significant connection between these two sacred places in the design of the outer wall’s gates. Ezekiel describes the eastern, northern, and southern gates, and says that inside them “were three alcoves on each side” (Ezek. 40:10). Structures resembling these chambered gates were found in Mount Gerizim. For the Persian period remains, the gates were of three chambers on each side, while during the Hellenistic period, they were reduced to two.⁹³

Another similarity between them is the location of several rooms adjacent to the Precinct’s wall. Inside the area of the Precinct were found chambers dedicated to storage all different kinds of materials and utensils needed for cultic rituals and the temple’s maintenance; and rooms allocated to the priests in the exercise of their

⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-148.

temple services. Also, a place called Place of Ashes, meant for the burning of offerings that were not fully consumed in the altar is mentioned in Leviticus (6:10-11, 1:16). A place matching this description, with remains of animal bones and a thick layer of ashes, was found near the east gate of the Persian period.⁹⁴

Magen concludes that “the first-phase temple at Mount Gerizim was modeled on the Second Temple in Jerusalem that was built by Zerubbabel during the return to Zion period [...] they built the temple following the plan apparently kept by the Jews in the Babylonian exile after the destruction of the first temple; the clearest and most detailed description of the plan appears in the Book of Ezekiel.”⁹⁵

The existence of an early temple on Mount Gerizim cannot be refuted, and, based on the archaeological studies carried out there, it is possible to date its construction during the Persian period, perhaps following the construction of Jerusalem’s temple. The choice of this place, on the other hand, poses several questions. If we have in mind that, in 445 BCE, the center of the Samaritan population was in Samaria, why was a temple built on Mount Gerizim?

Mount Gerizim is mentioned a couple of times in biblical texts along with Mount Ebal as the mounts of the blessings and curses, respectively (Dt 11:29; 27:12; Josh 8:33; Judg 9:7). However, the mention of a shrine or altar located in this place has been a matter of discussion because of differences between the Masoretic and Samaritan versions of the Pentateuch. While the Masoretic Text attests to the construction of an altar on Mount Ebal, the Samaritan Pentateuch places it on Gerizim. Opposed to this relative silence on Gerizim, there is a constant presence of Shechem as one of the most important places in the stories of Ancient Israel. We shall note that no archaeological evidence points to the existence of a temple or shrine before the one built during the Persian period on Mount Gerizim, nor has a temple been found in the area that was biblical Shechem.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

Magen claims that the temple was built during the Persian period on Mount Gerizim because of its sacred meaning for the remnant population from the kingdom of Israel.⁹⁶ Purvis makes the connection between Gerizim and Shechem and claims that with the construction of the temple there, Samaritans were trying to relate with an ancient Israelite tradition. However, Kartveit affirms that Mount Gerizim can hardly be said to belong to one of “the most ancient of Israel’s traditions” and asks why Gerizim was chosen instead of Shechem, known to have an ancient tradition as a sacred place. According to Kartveit, “the choice was done in adherence to a Mosaic command”⁹⁷ given in Dt 27:4-7, where the Samaritan Pentateuch reads Mount Gerizim instead on Mount Ebal for the construction of an altar.

The solution offered by Kartveit is problematic and raises more questions. On the one hand, it only transfers the same query to the text: why did the text choose Gerizim instead of Shechem? On the other hand, this solution assumes the existence of a widely accepted Pentateuch with a Mosaic legitimacy at an early date of the Persian period. As will be discussed later, the passages alluded by Kartveit as the reason for the choice of Gerizim appear to be later additions included for recognizing the religious and political role of Samaria when the Torah was composed. Thus, this Mosaic command followed the construction of the temple and not the other way around.

A plausible solution is that the construction of the temple in Gerizim during the Persian period followed the importance given to Shechem from ancient times, but, like many other temples like the one in Jerusalem or Hebron, the sacred Precinct was not built inside the city but on a close hill.⁹⁸

2.3. Jerusalem vs. Gerizim?

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁹⁷ Kartveit, *Origins of the Samaritans*, pp. 355-356.

⁹⁸ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*. Vol. II, p. 172.

After the fall of Babylon at the hands of the Persians, the Yawhistic communities in Palestine built two temples: one in the province of Yehud, in Jerusalem, and the other in the province of Samaria, on Mount Gerizim. It has been proposed to date their split at this moment, whether as a result of an alleged rejection of the northerners from the returnees' community or as a consequence of the erection of a rival sanctuary on Mount Gerizim. Now, we shall ask whether the construction of these two sanctuaries could be considered a *casus belli* between these two groups.

As we have mentioned, Ezra and Nehemiah give an account of the return from Babylon and the difficulties the returnees faced in rebuilding Jerusalem and its temple, and for the establishment of a new community. Among these difficulties, we find the opposition of other peoples, including the Samaritans, Arabs, and Ammonites, and the deviation of the same Israelites from what the authors of these books considered the proper observance of Yahweh's commandments. The composition of Ezra and Nehemiah presents several difficulties for its analysis and an accurate dating for each one of its layers. However, it depicts several concerns regarding the importance of the temple in Jerusalem, the observance of the law, and the separation from other groups through endogamic marriages. But, do these reflect an irreversible confrontation between religious groups resulting in mutual estrangement? We should note three critical aspects of the situation of Samaria and Judea and the relationship during this period.

First, we have to bear in mind the differences between these two provinces. After the Assyrian conquest and the creation of a Samarian province, the territory went through a demographic decline due to the Assyrian invasion and the deportation of part of its population. However, after the process of stabilization and during the Persian period, the region experienced a demographic recovery, especially in the northern and western parts. Most importantly, there was an administrative and cultural continuity between the Assyrian, Neo-Babylonian, and Persian periods. On the other hand, Judea and Jerusalem had been partially destroyed and depopulated after the Babylonian conquest, and the administrative center probably moved to Mizpah. Thus, the Judean elite that returned found a small,

poor, and depopulated Judea, compared to a wealthier and well-established province of Samaria.⁹⁹

Second, the epigraphic evidence has shown cultural links between Samaria and Judah. On the one hand, linguistically, both provinces shared the use of Aramaic as a day-to-day language, while Hebrew and its paleo-Hebrew script began to be used for sacred matters. On the other hand, the papyri found in Samaria and the inscriptions from Gerizim attest to the use of Yawhistic components in the onomastics. According to Zsengéllér, who analyzed slave conveyances, 80% of the names found were Hebrew and Aramaic, and, among these, 60% were Yawhistic, with names such as Yehohanan, Yehosapat or Yaqim.¹⁰⁰ The inscriptions from Gerizim present the same: from 89 names that could be identified, at least 35 are Hebrew names such as Yosef (no. 150), Yehonatan (no. 20), or even Yehuda (no. 49); all of these common in Judea as well.¹⁰¹ These show us that the Yawheistic traditions survived among Samaritans, and there was a cultural overlap with Judeans during the Persian and Hellenistic periods.¹⁰²

Third, it is evident that the returnees brought a new model of a temple-centered cult. As Nodet suggests, sacrifices were at the center of the standard practices, and for this, they only needed an altar. It is not unlikely that, once the new temple was built, it began to gain an essential role in the cultic life of the province and the political decision making, provoking or accelerating the disappearance of the local shrines and high places like the one in Bethel.¹⁰³ During the Persian period, the construction of a temple in Jerusalem, which intended to monopolize the cult, could have presented a direct affront to the Province of Samaria since part of its population was immersed in Yawhistic traditions. The well functioning of the temple in Jerusalem and its growing importance led a group of northern (or even southern as Josephus suggested) priests to seek the foundation of a similar temple at Gerizim.

⁹⁹ Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, pp. 103-109.

¹⁰⁰ Zsengéllér, *Gerizim as Israel*, pp. 141-149; Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, p. 115.

¹⁰¹ Magen, et. al., *Mount Gerizim Excavations*, Vol. I, pp. 225-26.

¹⁰² Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, pp. 103.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

Nevertheless, these similarities do not imply the non-existence of conflicts between both communities. The biblical texts show the existence of a tense relation, but they address this tension in different ways. The depiction of Hezekiah's reforms in the book of Chronicles (2 Chr. 28:12-15) includes a concern about the reunification of Israel sending letters to the northern tribes encouraging their "return" to Jerusalem. Let us remember that Hezekiah's reforms took place after the destruction of Israel and the process of crossed deportations. The author, then, considered the Samaritan Yahwists to be descendants of the remained Israelites and claimed the importance of Jerusalem's temple for the reunion of all the tribes. For Knoppers, this calling to return to Jerusalem might suggest the existence of the temple on Gerizim,¹⁰⁴ but it is also possible that it was just a first attempt of Judeans to attract the Samaritan Yahwists.

On the other hand, Ezra and Nehemiah do not address the northern tribes but present the people of Judah, more specifically the returnees, as the true Israel. Nor do they express an ongoing hope for the restoration of both Northern Israel and southern Israel under one leader. We should consider that Ezra and Nehemiah went through a complex process of redaction, but, as Heckl suggests, the original Nehemiah story "already saw the political and religious influence by Samaria as a problem and propagated the political and religious independence of Jerusalem."¹⁰⁵ However, the adversaries described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah should be considered as literary recreations that sought to represent the difficulties the returnees might have confronted for the reconstruction of Jerusalem and its temple. Also, they served as markers in the process of self-definition of the new community, where a group (probably a small priestly circle) demanded more than the worship of Yahweh for being part of the community.¹⁰⁶ This group introduced the idea that Israel

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁰⁵ Raik Heckl, "The composition of Ezra-Nehemiah as a Testimony for the competition Between the Temples in Jerusalem and on Mt. Gerizim in the Early Years of the Seleucid Rule over Judah," in *The Bible, Qumran, and the Samaritans*, Magnar Kartveit and Gary Knoppers (Eds.) (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, Inc., 2018) p. 131.

¹⁰⁶ Jacob Grätz, "The adversaries in Ezra/Nehemiah – Fictitious or Real? A Case Study in Creating Identity in Late Persian and Hellenistic Times," in *Between Cooperation and Hostility : Multiple Identities in Ancient Judaism and the Interaction with Foreign Powers*, Rainer Albertz and Jakob Wöhrle (Eds.), *Journal of Ancient Judaism, Supplements*, 11 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), p. 85.

should be separated from other peoples through the obedience of certain precepts commanded by God to keep the holiness of His people, one of these being the exogamic practices addressed in Ezra.¹⁰⁷

It has also been suggested that the stories in Ezra-Nehemiah intended to legitimize the temple in Jerusalem by giving it both divine and imperial sanction.¹⁰⁸ The insistence on the justification of Jerusalem's temple indicates that the legitimacy of Jerusalem was not an uncontested fact; it is possible that other shrines existed in the Diaspora like the one in Elephantine¹⁰⁹ and now, with the construction of a second one within the land of Israel, Jerusalem needed to affirm its supremacy. With this, they sought to convince the "Israelites" in Palestine and the Diaspora of the primacy of Jerusalem over Gerizim for financial interests.¹¹⁰

As we have seen, the Persian period was of great importance for the development of both Jewish and Samaritan communities. The Judahite community exiled in Babylon benefited from the Persian policies of return; led by their political and religious leaders, they headed towards their ancestral land where they built a temple with Babylonian influences on the organization of a city-temple. The Yawhistic group in Samaria also had crucial religious activity during this period. The construction of a temple on Mount Gerizim, probably following Jerusalem's example, helped the consolidation of a new community that will identify itself with this new temple. Even though we do not have sufficient evidence from the Samaritan side, three elements point towards the existence of an on-going relationship between the two communities.

First, we should mention that the Jerusalemite priesthood advocated for the centrality of Jerusalem. As we have mentioned, this centrality included the rest of Israel or not, depending on the nature of the priestly group. The exclusivist group is represented in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, where mixed marriages, not only

¹⁰⁷ Ophir and Rosen-Zvi, *Goy*, pp. 48-63.

¹⁰⁸ Grätz, "Adversaries in Ezra/Nehemiah."

¹⁰⁹ Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, p. 126.

¹¹⁰ Heckl, "Composition of Ezra-Nehemiah," p. 129.

among the population but also the priestly class, are denounced and condemned (Ezra 9-10; Neh. 13). This concern embodied in Ezra and Nehemiah might indicate that these marriages were common; as we have seen, there are also signs of Yahwistic continuity in the north.

The second element is found in the Elephantine Papyri. In 407 BCE, Jedaniah, the priest of the temple in Elephantine, sends petitions to Jehohanan, High Priest of Jerusalem, Bagavahya, Governor of Yehud, and Delaiah and Shelemiah, sons of Sanballat, governor of Samaria, of help for the reconstruction of the temple in Elephantine.¹¹¹ It is interesting enough that the community in Elephantine wrote to Yehud and Samaria, searching for help in the reconstruction of the temple, but what we want to highlight is the affirmative joined response from Bagavahya and Delaiah suggesting some sort of agreement or communication.

The third and more convincing proof of the existence of relations between the Judean and Samaritan Yahwists is the acceptance of both groups of a corpus of texts known as the Torah. This issue will be discussed in the next chapter.

It would be a mistake to assume the inexistence of any kind of tension between Jerusalem and Gerizim, especially if we have in mind that both were located in two different provinces, and both appealed to the same cultural group: Yahwists. Their priestly groups might have had a relationship sometimes tense, and some less, but, as we will see in the next chapter, it is evident that the communication and exchange of ideas did not cease and, in general, there is no evidence, exception made of a small group of Jerusalemite reformers, that they conceived each other as alien groups. Therefore, the erection of these two temples cannot be considered as the principal cause for the separation between them; at most, it can be said that these events laid the foundations for their self-definition.

¹¹¹ Bezalel Porten, *The Elephantine Papyri in English: Three Millennia of Cross-Cultural Continuity and Change*. *Idocumenta Et Monumenta Orientis Antiqui (Dmoa)*, V. 22 (Leiden: New York, 1996), pp. 139-147.

3. The Centralization of the Cult

Even though Samaritans and Jews differ in the place, they considered the most sacred, both of them agree that there is only one place for the worship of Yahweh.

This idea is grounded on a precept found in the book of Deuteronomy, which indicates that the sacrifices for Yahweh should only be performed in a place of divine choice. Regardless of their differences, both communities consider the Torah as the most sacred text containing the laws of God. However, the text of each one's Torah has a significant number of variations, some of them more influential for the reading and interpretation of the scriptures than others. The most critical differences between them are the ones related to the centralization of cult and the place where the altar/temple of Yahweh should be placed.

In this chapter, we will approach three issues. First, we will see the origin of the command of the centralization of the cult and its place within the Deuteronomistic tradition. Second, we will analyze the emergence of the Torah as an authoritative text for both Judean and Samaritan communities and how the ambiguity of the text regarding the place of worship helped for its acceptance. And third, the impact that the destruction of the temple in Gerizim had on the Samaritan additions to Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5.

3.1. The Deuteronomistic Tradition and its command of Centralization

The So-called Deuteronomistic History, composed of the books of Joshua, Samuel, and Kings, gives an account of the history of Israel and Judah from the conquest of the land to the destruction of Jerusalem. It was called that because these books share several principles with the book of Deuteronomy, like the exclusive worship of Yahweh, the cult centralization, and the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. The idea of grouping these texts was first proposed by Martin Noth, who considered that these ideological similarities could be explained by the fact that they were part of a single historical work redacted by an individual author during the Neo-Babylonian period.¹¹² However, even though the ideological similarities are apparent, there can

¹¹² Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomistic History* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981), 35-40.

be found some contradictions as well, that create problems for the hypothesis of a single redaction. In his book *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*,¹¹³ Frank Cross argues in favor of a double redaction for, at least, the book of Kings. For him, the first redaction took place during the reign of Josiah as a sort of propaganda of the monarchy and his religious reform, and the second was a revisionist redaction after the destruction of Judah. Cross recognizes as central themes the religious reform and the promise of an everlasting dynasty; these are developed throughout the book of Kings and reach their climax with Josiah. More recent studies on Deuteronomistic texts propose different layers of redaction that occurred in a span from the seventh to the fifth centuries BCE.¹¹⁴

We have already mentioned the early history of Israel and Judah, and how the destruction of the former had an impact on the evolution of the latter. An important reason for the development of the kingdom of Judah was the demographic explosion of the region, which led to an expansion of Jerusalem from being a small urban center of about forty thousand or fifty thousand square meters to occupy an area of sixty acres in just a few decades.¹¹⁵ At the end of the eighth century, the kingdom of Judah had about three hundred settlements, and its population grew to 120.000.¹¹⁶ This demographic explosion might have been a consequence of the arrival of many refugees from the north fleeing the Assyrian invasion.

Some scholars place the beginning of the Deuteronomistic redactions during the reign of Hezekiah¹¹⁷ because of the affirmation that “there was no one like him among all of the kings of Judah after him, or among those who were before him” (2 Kings 18:5), and because he is said to have destroyed the *bamoth* (2Kings 18:4). He was the king at the time of Israel’s destruction and probably obtained benefits from the situation. According to Finkelstein and Silberman, it was after the arrival of these

¹¹³ F.M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973).

¹¹⁴ Römer, *So-Called Deuteronomistic History*.

¹¹⁵ Finkelstein and Silberman, *La Biblia Desenterrada*, p. 267.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 265; Liverani, *Más allá de la Biblia*, p. 185.

refugees, during the reign of King Hezekiah, that the ancient traditions about King David (a southern king) and King Saul (a northern king) were recovered and mixed up to integrate the new population and to legitimize the monarchy of the House of David. Also, excavations in Arad, Beer-sheba, and Lachish might indeed confirm a cultic change in times of Hezekiah. These three places show evidence of the disuse of sanctuaries by the end of the eighth century.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, this reform could not progress because, in 705 BCE, after the death of Sargon II, Hezekiah suspended the payment of tribute and formed an anti-Assyrian coalition with the Pharaoh of Egypt and the king of the Chaldeans (2Kings 18:7-8). As a response, in 701 BCE, Sennacherib launched a military campaign against this coalition, defeated the Egyptians, and continued against the kingdom of Judah, devastating the Shephelah area, conquering Lachish and besieging the city of Jerusalem, a siege resolved with the paying of a ransom (2Kings 18:13-15).

Manasseh succeeded Hezekiah, and, according to the biblical text, during his reign, the cultic reform carried out by his father was pulled back, and the people returned to idolatry. What is certain is that during his reign, Judah achieved the development of his administrative structures, an enlargement of his territory, and a period of peace.¹¹⁹ He maintained good relations with the Assyrian empire, and there was probably an acceptance and diffusion of Neo-Assyrian culture and propaganda. A copy of the vassal treaty was possibly kept in Jerusalem.¹²⁰

Still, the more plausible scenario is to place the beginnings of the Deuteronomists during the reign of Josiah. Even though it is difficult to reconstruct his reign, we can give a general picture of the historical context drawing on different sources and archaeological studies. On the one hand, between 640 and 590 BCE, the Assyrian empire went through a decline process, which led to a peaceful withdrawal of its control of Syria-Palestine; thus, we should frame this reform within a context of territorial expansion and political empowering during a period of Assyrian

¹¹⁸ Finkelstein and Silberman, *David and Solomon*, pp. 285-288.

¹¹⁹ Finkelstein and Silberman, *La Biblia Desenerrada*, pp. 239-246.

¹²⁰ Thomas Römer, *So-Called Deuteronomistic History : A Sociological, Historical, and Literary Introduction*. (London: T & T Clark, 2005), p.70.

power contraction. On the other hand, the discovering of seals and documents from that period suggest an increase of alphabetization because of the development of Judah during the reign of Manasseh and Josiah, making plausible the production of literary works.¹²¹ These texts promoted the idea of the pact between Yahweh and Israel, the promise of the land, the exclusivity of Yahweh's cult, and the centrality of cult around Jerusalem (2Kings 22-23:1-30). Josiah's reform probably focused on the removal of Assyrian cult symbols and the centralization of Yahweh's worship."¹²² Seals also show changes in their designs: while the earlier ones contained symbols related to an astral cult such as the moon and stars, the seals after the alleged reform contain only names and floral decorations.¹²³

Even though Römer considers it a mistake to limit the editions of the Deuteronomistic work to a reduced number of revisions and suggests the intervention of several editors working on different texts, he identifies three major editing periods, each addressing different audiences approaching their concerns at that precise moment. The first of these periods corresponds precisely to the reign of Josiah.

With the Assyrian decay and the possibilities of growth, it is possible that during the reign of Josiah, the monarchy allied with a group of priests, scribes, and prominent families, among which was the Deuteronomistic school. The first stages of the Deuteronomistic literary works should be located within this context, as propaganda conceived to support the nationalistic and expansionist politics carried out by Josiah. However, they should not be considered a unified corpus of literary works, but a collection of documents addressing the concerns of this group. According to Römer, this first editorial group approached three principal themes: the first manuscript of Deuteronomy was concerned with political, economic, and religious reorganizations preserved in Dt. 12-25; a conquest account contained in Josh 3-12 reflects the territorial ambitions; and a Chronicle of Israelite and Judahite

¹²¹ Finkelstein and Silberman, *La Biblia Desenterrada*, p. 247.

¹²² Römer, *So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, p. 55.

¹²³ Finkelstein and Silberman, *La Biblia Desenterrada*, p. 253.

kings served as propaganda legitimizing the Davidic dynasty.¹²⁴ In the present chapter, we will focus on the question of the cult centralization.

Deuteronomy 12 is considered to be the centralization section *par excellence* where the text establishes only one cultic place, according to Römer, it was, along with Deuteronomy 6:4-5, the opening of this first version of the book, originally conceived as a legal corpus. In this chapter, the centralization formula is repeated several times (Dt. 12:4-7, 11-12, 13-14, 21, 18, 26-27). Still, the verses appear to fall in three units: verses 2-7 correspond to Persian-period additions, verses 8-12 to an exilic edition, and verses 13-18, the oldest one, were probably directed to landowners.¹²⁵

The unit corresponding to the time of Josiah contains the verses 13-18. The centrality formula in v. 14: “but only at the place that the Lord will choose in one of your tribes (כי אם במקום אשר יבחר יהוה באחד שבטים),” opposes a totality of places in v. 13 (בכל מקום) against one sanctuary (במקום) located in one of the tribes (באחד שבטים). The regulations presented in this unit points to the context of political and economic changes that Judah underwent during the seventh century BCE. The allowing of non-ritual sacrifices (Dt. 12:15) might have been to eliminate the need of priests outside the capital and the command of bringing the tithes to the central sanctuary (Dt. 12:17) to rest economic power to those priestly groups.¹²⁶

The reform of Josiah was interrupted by his death at the hands of Pharaoh Neco, and Judah followed the same destiny as Israel, invaded by the Babylonians. The destruction of Jerusalem, the deportation of its population, and the fall of the monarchy had a severe impact on Deuteronomists living in exile. Römer follows a theory proposed by A. Steil for the study of crisis-semantics during the French revolution. Stein suggests three categories: Prophet, priest, and Mandarin. According to Römer, these three categories can be applied to literary works of the Neo Babylonian period. The prophetic is represented by Second Isaiah, which

¹²⁴ Römer, *So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, p. 71.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 58-61.

interprets the exile as a necessary transition to a new order. The priestly document of the Pentateuch reworks the traditions of the origins and places the rituals and practices in a mythical time prior to the monarchy. Finally, Mandarin is represented by the Deuteronomistic school in exile, which sought to explain the monarchy's failure through the construction of a historical account and its interpretation as a consequence of the rupture of the covenant with Yahweh.¹²⁷

It is probably during this Babylonian period that Deuteronomy was placed as an introduction for the following books of Joshua Judges Samuel and Kings. This change is evident in the insertion of speeches from famous historical characters such as Moses, Joshua, and Solomon in the different books, which served as pillars for the structure of the Deuteronomistic history edition in the exile.¹²⁸ In the case of Deuteronomy, the old Assyrian-like declaration of loyalty to Yahweh and centralizing document is transformed into an overture for the story of Israel and re-edited as a Moses' last will.

We also can identify an editing layer in Deuteronomy 12. It is in verses 8-12 that it is evident a change of the audience to which the author addresses. The commandment, now directed to a group that is not in the land, sets the scene within the context of the exodus, intending to relate the exiles with the exodus generation. An important change in the centrality formula (v. 11) is the addition of a new concept: the dwelling of the name (לשכן שמו שם) Yahweh dwells in the sky, but he chooses a place for his name to dwell.¹²⁹

After the return from the exile, the Deuteronomistic work kept changing; Römer points two additional editing periods. One of them was carried out by Deuteronomists within the historical context of the returnees, addressing issues such as the separation of Israel from the other nations and the attempts to substitute a

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 111-115.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 61-63.

book-based cult to a traditional temple one.¹³⁰ Further changes were made to the Deuteronomistic texts during the process of compilation of the Torah.

3.2. The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Creation of the Torah

The Samaritan Pentateuch differs from the Jewish in the addition of a series of small but critical “sectarian” changes. These additions were introduced late in the 2nd or 1st century BCE, probably during the Maccabean times, when the relations between Judean and Samaritan Yahwists took a decidedly negative turn. Anderson and Giles propose to classify the variants between the MT and the SP first in three different texts corresponding to different periods. The first is a base text dating to the first half of the second century after the translation of LXX. Then, there existed a pre-Samaritan text between the first century BCE and the first CE with exegetical and non-exegetical differences. The third is the Samaritan text between the third and the first centuries BCE with sectarian differences.¹³¹

In the SP text, we can also identify three different groups of variations. The non-exegetical changes are orthographic differences between texts, variations on the vocalization, improvements in style of the redaction, or simply scribal mistakes due to the confusion of letters.¹³² A second group is exegetical changes which represented a more significant correction of the text and cannot be simply explained by scribal mistakes but, they show an intention of the redactor to harmonize passages, clarify dates, or validate positions like the one of Moses over Aaron (Ex. 32:10).¹³³ And finally, two specific additions that, for Purvis, indicate a clear sectarian intention: the

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

¹³¹ Robert Anderson and Terry Giles, *The Samaritan Pentateuch: an Introduction to Its Origin, History, and Significance for Biblical Studies* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), p. 75.

¹³² *Ibid.*, pp. 76-79.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 79-89.

Centralization Formula in Deuteronomy and the Samaritan Tenth Commandment in Ex. 20 and Dt. 5.¹³⁴

Before we address the differences between the two versions of the Pentateuch, we have to provide a general history for the compilation process of the literary/legal corpus we know now as Torah. Modern scholarly generally agree that the Pentateuch did not reach its present form (or at least a recognizable structure) until perhaps the Persian Period.¹³⁵

This late date of composition does not mean that all of its content was redacted at this moment. David Carr identifies three phases of development. First, an early stage of the composition of separate narratives, especially local traditions or early cultic regulations, probably gathered, as we already saw, during the reigns of Hezekiah and Josiah. The second phase has to be placed in the Exile when the Deuteronomists revised and composed their texts as did the priestly group, giving place to the first proto-Pentateuchal narratives. Finally, during the post-exilic period around 400 BCE, these narratives were combined perhaps as an attempt to reconcile the positions of different groups.¹³⁶

Like the return of the exiles and the temple's reconstruction, the elaboration of a Law Code was claimed to follow an imperial initiative. According to Ezra 1, that scribe was sent by King Artaxerxes to teach the Law in Judah and Jerusalem, and the king provided him with resources and authority to enforce this law. Just as we cannot take for granted the Persian support for the building of the temple, we should take care not to identify this biblical account as a historical fact. It is true that both Persian kings and the Persian Empire are "never said to be an abomination and are never condemned as is the case of Egyptians, Assyrians, and Babylonians,"¹³⁷ but this could be explained by the fact that they were considered liberators who defeated

¹³⁴ Purvis, *Samaritan Pentateuch*, p. 73.

¹³⁵ David M. Carr, "The Rise of Torah," in *Pentateuch As Torah: New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance*, Gary N. Knoppers, and Bernard M. Levinson (Eds.) (Winona Lake: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007) p. 40.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 46-49.

¹³⁷ Römer, "Conflicting Models," p. 34.

the Babylonians and were liberal with the internal affairs of their provinces. This favorable image of the Persians also supports the composition of the Torah at this period.

Hagedorn suggests that, even if the Persians did not exert pressure over their provinces and indeed did not command the redaction of a legal corpus, “the complex dialectic within any colonial context allows for an imagined pressure felt by the colonized subjects to avoid conflict with the hegemonic power.”¹³⁸ Thus, the promotion of exilic traditions from the returnees community might have been related to the struggle for political dominance between the recently arrived and those who were inhabiting the land. The Persian recognition of these traditions as the valid law for the province of Yehud and its population could have helped to win the control. Still, this Persian recognized law could not have been just a local compilation of traditions but must have been able to represent the complexity of the Judean population, even those Yawhists outside Yehud. The need for outside recognition might have led to the merging of different traditions, even those confronted with each other, into a single unified Torah.¹³⁹

Having this in mind, Römer points out that “if the Pentateuch had originated only in Judah and the Golah, it is hardly understandable why the Samaritan Yawhwists would have adopted this document.”¹⁴⁰ However, even though the first redactional works were carried out in Judah by the Judahite elite and priests, they contained several traditions of northern origin. The preservation of these northern traditions leads Cristophe Nihan to suggest that “the Torah, though probably compiled in Jerusalem, was nonetheless intended to be adopted by Yahwists in Samaria.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Anselm Hagedorn, “Local Law in an Imperial Context: The Role of Torah in the (Imagined) Persian Period,” in *Pentateuch As Torah: New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance*, Gary N. Knoppers, and Bernard M. Levinson (Eds.) (Winona Lake: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007) p. 69.

¹³⁹ Carr, “Rise of Torah,” pp. 54-56.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas Römer, “Cult Centralization and the Publication of the Torah Between Jerusalem and Samaria,” in *The Bible, Qumran, and the Samaritans*, Magnar Kartveit and Gary N. Knoppers (Eds.) (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, Inc., 2018), p. 81.

¹⁴¹ Cristophe Nihan, “The Torah between Samaria and Judah: Shechem and Gerizim in Deuteronomy and Joshua,” in *Pentateuch As Torah: New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance*, Gary N. Knoppers and Bernard M. Levinson (Winona Lake: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), pp. 191.

Thus, the Torah as a composition of several literary traditions might have been produced within a context of compromise and cooperation, not only between different scribal and priestly groups but between the Judean and Samaritan communities.

3.3. “The Place that YHWH your God will choose.”

Ambiguity in the text

One of the significant differences between MT and the SP is a different reading of the so-called Centralization formula: “the place that the Lord your God **will choose/has chosen.**” While the first has the verb **בחר** (to choose) in a *yiqtol* form: **יבחר**, commonly translated as future action, that is: will choose; the second has the same verb but in the *qatal* form: **בחר**, rendered as an action that has already occurred and commonly translated as: has chosen. This relatively small change has significant consequences within the full reading of the respective corpus. The **בחר** found in SP can be interpreted as referring to a specific place: Gerizim; this because of the Samaritan additions to Ex. 20 and Dt. 5, which we will discuss later. The **יבחר**, implies that the place has not been chosen, explaining the absence of any reference to it within the book of Deuteronomy, it is not until the book of Samuel that Jerusalem is presented as the chosen place.

At first, it was thought that the SP reading was due to a sectarian revision intended to support the legitimacy of their sanctuary on Gerizim.¹⁴² More recently, several scholars point out that the LXX, the Old Latin, and the Coptic versions of the Torah, and also Neh 1:9, support the Samaritan reading. According to Schorch, it is the MT reading that was a late correction and dates to the second half of the second century BCE. This date is based on the differences found among the Dead Sea Scrolls: while 4QMMT, dated to the mid-second century, has **בחר**, the Temple Scroll

¹⁴² Purvis, *Samaritan Pentateuch* pp. 72-73.

dated to the late second century, presents **יבחר**.¹⁴³ He even goes further and claims that the first version of Deuteronomy had initially been redacted in the northern kingdom of Israel and later on traveled southwards after the Assyrian conquest of Israel among northerner scribal groups that sought refuge in Judah.¹⁴⁴

Now, if the book of Deuteronomy was originally redacted in the north, with the **בחר** reading supporting Gerizim's sanctuary, and the correction was made in the second century BCE. Why and how did Judeans accept it? Schorch proposes a process of de-contextualization and re-contextualization of the text, carried out by the Judean priestly and scribal circles. This option permitted different interpretations of the text. One possible understanding of the "original" **בחר** is attested in Nehemiah 1:8-9, where he reproduces the text of Deut 30 and links it with Jerusalem, implying that Jerusalem was already the chosen place in times of Moses. The other possibility was to consider a succession of chosen places. Since the original was accepted and maintained for several years, the insertion of **יבחר** was, then, due to an anti-samaritan correction of the text.¹⁴⁵

Römer also accepts **בחר** as original but, for him, the real question is whether this reading would discard the identification of Jerusalem as the chosen place. Unlike Schorch, Römer affirms that there is no doubt of the Judean origin of the formula and its reference to Jerusalem. Following a suggestion by Lohfink, Römer proposes that an older version of the formula was conceived as a royal decree from the times of Josiah and Jerusalem might have been mentioned but later removed when the whole text was edited as the last Moses' will; this would explain **בחר** as the first reading. During the exilic revision, the **בחר** could have changed to **יבחר** when Deuteronomy became the opening of the Deuteronomistic history to grant legitimacy

¹⁴³ Stefan Schorch, "The Samaritan Version of Deuteronomy and the Origin of Deuteronomy," in *Samaria, Samaritans, Samaritans*, József Zsengellér (Ed.), Studies on Bible, History and Linguistics (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2011), pp. 33-34.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-30.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 32.

to other places contained in the traditions gathered by the Deuteronomists without resting any to Jerusalem.¹⁴⁶

The newest addition to the text (Dt. 12:2-7), sought to frame the two earliest versions and combines the language of both. The claims for separation from the nations points to a post-exilic redaction, probably indicating the confrontation between returnees and remain population (vv. 2-3).¹⁴⁷ A significant novelty of this addition is the reformulation of Dt. 12:14 in verse 5, where the election of the place changes from being chosen from only one tribe (באחד שבטים) to be chosen out of all tribes (כל שבטים). During this re-edition, Deuteronomy was separated from the other Deuteronomistic texts to be integrated into the Pentateuch. We suggest that it was also at this moment that the בחר was reinstated. All these changes were made as a concession made to the Samaritan Yahwists, giving ambiguity to the text and allowing the chosen place to be other than Jerusalem or even out of Judah.¹⁴⁸

Whether the centralization formula was originally redacted using בחר או יבחר, there is no direct mention of the exact location where the altar to Yahweh shall be erected. Most of the interpretations and modern reconstructions of Israel's history consider it to be a reference to Jerusalem's temple. In contrast to these positions, Schorch affirms that the place chosen is indicated in Deuteronomy 27:4-8, which prescribes an altar in Mount Gerizim. As a principal argument, he pleads the existence of structural similarities and wording parallels between Deuteronomy 27 and Deuteronomy 11-12, which, for him, makes evident the connection of the Gerizim altar with the centralization form. Additionally, he claims that this also supports a northern origin for Deuteronomy,

The arguments presented by Schorch have several inconsistencies. On the one hand, the northern origin of Deuteronomy cannot be sustained with textual and historical proofs. First, it has been shown that Deuteronomy has similarities with the Loyalty oath of Esarhaddon, possibly an oath taken by Judah preserved in

¹⁴⁶ Römer, "Cult Centralization," p- 84-85.

¹⁴⁷ Römer, *So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, pp. 63-64.

¹⁴⁸ Römer, "Cult Centralization," p. 86.

Jerusalem and copied later on during the redaction of the first version of Deuteronomy.¹⁴⁹ Second, even if we sort out the issue of the date by placing its redaction during the Assyrian period in the north, we lack a proper economic and political context that supports claims of centralization in the north, especially in a sanctuary on Gerizim.

On the other hand, the comparison made between Deuteronomy 27 and 11:31-12:18 to show their parallels, omits the clear dependence with Exodus 20 and forces the parallels with the centralization formula. Even though the actions that have to be performed are similar, the place referred is not the same, while Dt. 27:4-6a speaks about the setting of an altar on Mount Gerizim, Dt. 12:4-5 only addresses the place that Yahweh will choose. It is evident that Dt. 27 has a connection with Deut 12, but this does not mean that both verses were conceived as complementary and redacted as a unit.

Contrary to Schorch's position, Nihan proposes at least two redactional layers for the so-called Shechem covenant tradition in Dt 11:29-30; 27; and finds a relation with the book of Joshua. The first redaction comprised verses 1-3 and 9-10 and commands to set up large stones covered with plaster on the day they cross the Jordan. For him, the set up of stones and the location immediately after crossing the Jordan could have been an attempt to link the passage with Josh 4 and the erection of stones at Gilgal.¹⁵⁰

We find, therefore, a geographical conflict. If we accept the connection between the first layer and Joshua, the commandment to place the stones right after the entry was accomplished by Joshua, and the location matches Gilgal. But a second layer identified in verses 4-8 and 11-13 places the event at the vicinity of Shechem and adds a ceremony of blessing and cursing at Mounts Gerizim and Ebal; this addition belongs to a late, Persian-period redaction of the Pentateuch.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Römer, *So-Called Deuteronomistic History*, p. 82; Liverani, *Más Allá de la Biblia*, p. 195;

¹⁵⁰ Nihan, "Torah between Samaria and Judah," pp. 206-208.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

A second addition is made within the second layer. Contrary to the first one, where it is commanded to inscribe the words of the Torah in plastered stones, it is now stipulated that an altar to Yahweh should be built (Dt. 27:5). We shall note three crucial matters about this addition. The first thing is the very reference to an altar. While Deuteronomy 12 repeats the Centralization formula (מקום אשר יבחר יהוה) in six different verses (Dt. 12:5,11,14,18,21,26) an altar (מזבח) is only mentioned two times in verse 27. If we extend our search to the entire book of Deuteronomy, we find that the formula is repeated fifteen additional times (Dt. 14:23, 24, 25; 15:20; 16:2, 6, 7, 11, 15, 16; 17:8; 18:6; 23:16; 26:2; 31:11) for a total of twenty-one, while the altar is only mentioned another two times (Dt. 16:21; 26:4), leaving aside the ones in Dt. 27. A second observation is a dependence on Ex. 20:24-25 for the instructions of an altar of stones (מזבח אבנים) on which no iron tool was used.¹⁵² And last, the importance of this dependence lies in the nature of Exodus 20:24. It is part of what is known as the Covenant Code, an earlier tradition that, contrary to Deuteronomy, does not advocate for the centralization of cult; instead it refers to “every place (כל) (המקום) where I cause my name to be remembered.”

Samarian Yahwists could claim the legitimacy of Gerizim since it is there where an altar is commanded to be built, furthermore the instructions for the construction of the altar go in accordance with the old prescriptions contained in the covenant code. Additionally, even though the law collection of Deuteronomy (11:31-26:19) does not mention the place chosen, it is framed by the Gerizim-Ebal ceremonies placed before and after the legal corpus (11:29-30; 27:1-26).¹⁵³

The connection with Exod 20, the inclusion of the ceremony of blessing and cursing, and the erection of plastered stones allowed another interpretation. For Judeans, the construction of the altar at Gerizim could be seen as a one-time event before the construction of the definite altar, “this suggests that for the author of Dt. 27:4-8, the altar on Mount Gerizim was legitimate *but only in the sense that the Torah*

¹⁵² Gary N. Knoppers, “Altared States: The Altar Laws in the Samaritan and Jewish Pentateuchs and their Early Interpreters,” in *The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Michaël Langlois (Ed.), Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, 94 (Leuven Belgium: Peeters, 2019), p. 105.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-109.

preserves a law authorizing multiple sanctuaries that coexist with the centralization law of Deuteronomy 12."¹⁵⁴

Thus, placing the ceremony and the altar at Mount Gerizim was a concession to the Samaritan Yahwists who had recently built their sanctuary at that place. The ambiguity in Deuteronomy regarding the location of the one altar to Yahweh leaves this issue to interpretation. While the Samaritan Yahwists could relate this commandment with the erection of an altar at Mount Gerizim, therefore this place being the chosen one, Judeans, on the other hand, had a more extensive literature, where the election of Jerusalem is developed through the books of Samuel and Kings.¹⁵⁵

The question of whether the Ebal-Gerizim tradition is ancient or a late addition remains open. There are two possible explanations for this. The first is that, together with Shechem, existed a tradition that placed a sanctuary or an altar on Mount Gerizim. The second is that the location on top of the mountain was chosen because of a strategic location on the one hand, and its proximity to Shechem on the other; during the compilation of the Torah the explicit mention to Gerizim was added merely as a concession to the Samaritan Yahwists. It remains, however, to explain the place that Mount Ebal played in this addition.

Regarding the differences between the MT (Ebal) and SP (Gerizim) for the place of the altar, the Greek translation dated to the third century BCE also designates Gerizim as the place for the altar. This testimony might indicate that the Samaritan version is more likely the original since it is difficult to think that an altar for Yahweh shall be placed on the mountain destined for the curses and that Judeans made the correction after the split.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ Nihan, "Torah between Samaria and Judah," p. 215.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 214-216.

¹⁵⁶ Stefan Schorch, "The Construction of Samari(t)an Identity from the Inside and from the Outside," in *Between Cooperation and Hostility : Multiple Identities in Ancient Judaism and the Interaction with Foreign Powers*, Rainer Albertz and Jakob Wöhrle (Eds.), *Journal of Ancient Judaism. Supplements*, 11 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), p. 142; Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, p. 203; Nihan, "Torah between Samaria and Judah," p. 214.

We have seen in the previous chapter that Gerizim and the province of Samaria show a continuity of Yahwist traditions. Also, the books of Ezra and Nehemiah describe a controversy with marriages outside the Judean group, which suggests that it was a common practice, even among the priestly class. Then, it is possible that Jerusalem (or priests rooted in Jerusalemite traditions) sought to stretch relations with this community. By adding the verses already mentioned created intentionally an ambiguity in the new Torah that permitted each sanctuary with its priesthood to interpret it and legitimized themselves. In words of Knoppers: “Deuteronomy, in particular, and the Pentateuch, in general, functioned in the Persian and Hellenistic period as a compromise document,”¹⁵⁷ which permitted and reflected the coexistence of both Jerusalem and Gerizim communities and “a history of intermittent cooperation between Judean and Samaritan scribes over a considerable period of time prior to the Maccabean expansion.”¹⁵⁸

3.4. The Destruction of Gerizim and the “sectarian” additions

The coexistence of Jerusalem’s and Gerizim’s temples did not imply the absence of any sort of polemics between them and their ruling priesthood. As indicated in the present thesis, the biblical texts do show a confrontation between the north and the south and different tensions between their priestly groups. But there are also numerous proofs of an ongoing relationship of mutual acceptance and recognition of being part of the same ethnic group,

Both temples coped with each other, having an underlying rivalry but without an open confrontation or total exclusion of the other community. Three factors could explain this minor acceptance.

1. Their location in two different provinces during the Persian period.

¹⁵⁷ Knoppers, “Altared States,” p. 125.

¹⁵⁸ Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, p. 177.

2. The presence of Yawhistic population in both provinces and the ongoing relations between both groups.
3. The impossibility of constituting a fully independent entity that could attempt the territorial unification gathering the whole Yawhistic population.

All of this changed first with the beginning of the Hellenistic period and then with the Maccabean revolt and the constitution of an independent Judean state ruled by leaders who held both political and religious leaderships.

After the death of Alexander, Palestine was disputed continuously by the Ptolemaic kingdom of Egypt and the Seleucids in Syria. Under the Ptolemies (301-198 BCE), the Judean political organizations were probably preserved High priesthood and the Judean assemblies. While during the Persian period, Samaria and Yehud were two completely different provinces, under Ptolemaic rule they were fused into one single province. According to Benedikt Hensel, it was because of this unification of the two provinces that the conflict between the two temples arose because of political and economic reasons. The two temples were forced to coexist within the borders of the same province, starting a competition for the favors of the Hellenistic rulers.¹⁵⁹

At the end of the third century, the control of Palestine was taken by the Seleucids, one of them, Antiochus IV, is remembered for his attempt to forbid Judean traditions. Even though the book of Maccabees and tradition claims an attempt to “Hellenize” Judea and Jerusalem by force during the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (1Macc. 1:41-50), the reality is that the book might reflect a process of Hellenization of the Judean elites and a reaction from a conservative party, resulting in an internal struggle for political power (1Macc. 1:11-15).¹⁶⁰ The Seleucid intervention then was not to impose the Hellenistic way of life and religious practices but to intervene in that internal struggle favoring the Hellenistic party. However, the winning party was

¹⁵⁹ Benedikt Hensel, “On the Relationship of Judah and Samaria in Post-Exilic Times: A Farewell to the Conflict Paradigm,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, vol. 4 (2019), p. 33.

¹⁶⁰ Lester Grabbe, “The Jews and Hellenization: Hengel and His Critics,” in *Second Temple Studies III: Studies in Politics, Class and Material Culture*, Philip R. Davies and John M. Halligan (Eds.) (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2009), pp. 52-66.

the conservative one led by Judas Maccabeus and his family. Even though during the first years of the Hasmonean period, Judea was not fully independent, the new politico-religious leaders played an increasingly important role in international politics by supporting different candidates to the Seleucid throne.

After his death, Judas Maccabeus was succeeded by his brothers Jonathan (161-142 BCE) and Simon (142-134 BCE) as leaders of the rebels against the Seleucid control. In 152 BCE, Jonathan took advantage of the Seleucid disputes over the throne and supported Alexander Balas, receiving in exchange the High priesthood. Again, in ca. 145 BCE, supported the aspirations of Demetrius II Nicator, who, in return, annexed to Judea three southern districts from Samaria: Lydda (Lod), Aphairema (Ephraim) and Ramathaim (Ram). Additionally, Demetrius awarded the exemption of royal taxes to "all those who offer sacrifices in Jerusalem." This exclusive exemption was probably an attempt by Jonathan to establish Jerusalem as the only legitimate temple and its High Priest (Jonathan himself) as the legitimate leader, with the economic benefits that would imply.¹⁶¹

The relations between Samaritans and Judeans underwent a radical change during the rule of John Hyrcanus (134-104 BCE). According to Josephus, Hyrcanus led a series of military campaigns (*Ant.*13.254-258; *War* 1.63-64) against cities in Samaria and Idumea and achieved an important enlargement of the Judean territory. Scholars have discussed Josephus' reports on Hyrcanus' campaigns, and the archaeological expeditions in Samaria and Idumea have shown destruction layers and occupational gaps in the alluded territories.¹⁶² The interesting issue is not the attack on settlements in these regions but the differences in the patterns of destruction and reoccupation.

We have two different scenarios: one in Idumea and North Samaria, and the other in Gerizim and its surroundings. For Idumea, the imposition of practices like

¹⁶¹ Bourgel, Jonathan. "The Samaritans during the Hasmonean Period: The Affirmation of a Discrete Identity?," *Religions* 10, no. 11, (2019), p. 8.

¹⁶² Kenneth Atkinson, *A History of The Hasmonean State: Josephus and Beyond*, Jewish and Christian Texts. (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), p. 68.

circumcision, and the forced integration to the Hasmonean state have been questioned by Kenneth Atkinson, who claims that “the region south of Judea was annexed without any significant conflict.”¹⁶³ However, the Idumean colonies in Egypt, probably exiled after Hyrcanu’s conquests, and the destruction of several settlements indicate the opposite.¹⁶⁴ Excavations also indicate the general destruction of Samaria; surveys in areas like the Beth-Shean and Jezreel Valleys show a decrease of sites from the Hellenistic to the Roman periods.¹⁶⁵

Bourgel notes that while it is said that people from Samaria or Idumea were enslaved or driven out of their cities, this is not the case with the pre-Samaritan community.¹⁶⁶ According to excavations in Gerizim, the place shows signs of destruction dated to 111/110 BCE; Hyrcanus besieged the city and burned both the temple and the residential area. The finding of several ovens in public buildings complexes indicates the defensive actions during the siege.¹⁶⁷ In contrast, a survey carried out by Edward Campbell in the surroundings of Tell Balatha showed that besides the destruction of Shechem, life in other sites was not affected by Hyrcanus’ campaigns.¹⁶⁸ The same continuity was found in the southern and eastern areas bordering Gerizim.¹⁶⁹

The difference, as Bourgel suggests, might be explained by the nature of the population in these areas. The destruction of urban and rural settlements in Samaria and Idumea, as well as the imposition of Judean practices, could be explained as an attempt to integrate Idumeans, with no “Israelite” origin or an extended Yawheist tradition, to the Judean nation.¹⁷⁰ Instead, in Gerizim, destruction was focused on the temple and the cities of Gerizim and Shechem and not to the rural settlements

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

¹⁶⁴ Bourgel, Jonathan. "The Destruction of the Samaritan Temple by John Hyrcanus: A Reconsideration." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 135, no. 3 (2016), p. 509.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 513.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 511.

¹⁶⁷ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*. Vol. II, p. 12.

¹⁶⁸ Edward Campbell and Karen Summers, *Shechem II: Portrait of a Hill Country Vale: The Shechem Regional Survey*, Archaeological Reports, No. 2. (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1997), p. 97

¹⁶⁹ Bourgel, "Destruction of the Samaritan Temple," p. 517.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 510.

around them because the intention was the elimination of the rival sanctuary and to prevent its reconstruction. A structure located at the complex known as Northwestern Quarter or Area K, unlike the other sites, does not show any signs of being destroyed by fire, and coins from the Hasmonean period were found, indicating its occupation after the destruction of the city. These findings led Magen to suggest the setting up of a Judean military post to prevent the reoccupation of the city and temple at Gerizim.¹⁷¹ Since the population here shared the Yahwist traditions, it was not necessary to carry out extensive destruction or forced integration. Probably, Hyrcanus “thought that the Samaritans as Israelites would become Judean (religiously) in the absence of the Mt. Gerizim shrine, and probably some did.”¹⁷²

But, why did Hyrcanus decide to attack and destroy the temple of Gerizim? Even though the claims for centralization around Jerusalem and the attempts to attract Yahwist worshipers and their offerings from northern regions and Diaspora communities were there before the Hasmonean period, their location in different provinces and the foreign control of the region made it impossible for one to overcome the other. However, the change of the political situation and the empowering of the Judean state under the Hasmoneans permitted them to achieve these ambitions. By seizing Samaria and destroying Gerizim’s temple, Hyrcanus intended to expand the Judean territory and to secure the taxes and offerings for Jerusalem’s temple.

There is little doubt about the critical role that the Hasmonean period played for the definition of both communities. The Hasmonean concentration of power and the benefits they obtained from this might have affected the relations between the priesthoods in Gerizim and Jerusalem. The securing of tax exemptions first, and the destruction of the temple on Gerizim undoubtedly harmed the Samaritan Yahwist Priesthood’s interests. When Hyrcanus destroyed the temple on Gerizim, he eliminated the only place that could compete with Jerusalem in legitimacy. As we have seen, these policies probably intended to integrate the Samaritan population

¹⁷¹ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*. Vol. II, p. 81.

¹⁷² Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, p. 213-213.

into the new Judean state fully; however, the destruction of their temple “caused an ideological-religious transformation among the Samaritans”¹⁷³ and what began as an attempt to have political and economic control “became a theological and national problem when the neighboring peoples refused to give up their own cult places and submit to Jerusalem.”¹⁷⁴

As we have seen, the Torah was compiled during the Persian period, and, by the times of the Hasmoneans, it already had some authority among the different Yawhist groups. Several authors assure us that the redaction of a Samaritan version of the Torah was decisive for the split with Judeans and point towards this period for the creation of this version.¹⁷⁵ The ambiguity of the text leaving the issue of the place chosen open to interpretation permitted the acceptance of both communities but, in this new context, “each community construed the centralization legislation in its own way and developed its own interpretive traditions in dealing with the specifics of the Deuteronomic program”¹⁷⁶ on one side the Judean ambitions recovered the election of Jerusalem and, on the other, the Samaritan Yahwists focused on the Pentateuch’s text.

Even though the sectarian nature of the differences between the Masoretic and Samaritan versions of Deut 27 and the centralization formula has been refuted, there is little doubt that the text suffered several changes during and after the Hasmonean period. On the one hand, it has already been proposed that the Masoretic reading of Deut 27:4 could be a Judean correction that intended to deprive of the legitimacy of the sanctuary at Gerizim.¹⁷⁷ On the other hand, even though the centralization formula poses some difficulties for determining the “original” reading, it is certain that while the Judean “will choose (יבחר)” is more ambiguous, the

¹⁷³ Mor, “Building of the Samaritan Temple,” p. 99.

¹⁷⁴ Ingrid Hjelm, *The Samaritans and Early Judaism : A Literary Analysis*, Copenhagen International Seminar, (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), p.237.

¹⁷⁵ Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, p. 215; Bourgel, “Samaritans during the Hasmonean Period,” p. 11.

¹⁷⁶ Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*, p. 195.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

Samaritan has “chosen (יבחר)” agrees with other changes intended to eliminate this ambiguity.

The so-called Samaritan Tenth Commandment or the Gerizim Commandment is one of the most significant differences between the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Masoretic Text. As we have seen, together with the בחר reading in Deuteronomy and the allusion of an altar at Mount Gerizim, it is considered to be one of the sectarian additions and corrections to the text. However, as well as with the other two divergences, its sectarian nature has been recently contested.

As the name suggests, this variation was made on the biblical legal code known as the Ten Commandments contained in Exodus 20:2-17 and Deuteronomy 5:2-17. It consists of the addition of a supposedly new commandment right in-between the last commandment and the words of the people to Moses. The resulting text the Samaritan Ex. 20:17 and Dt. 5:21 is as follows:

You shall not covet your neighbor's house, and you shall not covet of your neighbor his field and wife or his male slave or his female slave his bull and his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor (Ex. 20:17; Dt. 5:21)
And when the Lord your God will bring you to the land of the Canaanites which you are going to inherit (Dt. 11:29a)
You shall set yourself up large stones and coat them with plaster (Dt. 27: 2b)
And write on these stones all the words of this law (Dt. 27: 2b)
And when you have crossed the Jordan you shall set up these stones I command you today, in Argerizim (Dt. 27: 4)
And you build there an altar to the Lord your God, an altar of stones. Do not use any iron tool on them. (Dt. 27: 5)
Build the altar of the Lord your God of complete stones and offer burnt offerings on it to the Lord your God (Dt. 27: 6)
And sacrifice offerings there, eating them and rejoicing in the presence of the Lord your God. (Dt. 27: 7)
This mountain is across the Jordan, westward, toward the setting sun, near the great trees of Moreh, in the territory of those Canaanites who dwell in Arabah opposite Gilgal (Dt. 11:30)
At Elon Moreh, facing Shechem.
When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance / These are the commandments the Lord proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness; and he added nothing more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me (Ex 20:18/Dt. 5:22)

As we can see, the text does not consist of a completely new addition. Instead, the information contained in other biblical passages was inserted; in this case, the text comes from the book of Deuteronomy, more specifically, from the already discussed instructions for an altar on Mount Gerizim. The mention of an altar within the Ten Commandments context has been interpreted as giving divine sanction to it. As Knoppers points out, the instructions in Deut 27 are given by Moses, while the Ten Commandments are the direct words from Yahweh.¹⁷⁸ However, Schorch questions the interpretation of the Gerizim passage as the supposedly tenth commandment, and claims that the Gerizim addition was a conclusion following an introductory formula in Ex 20:2 being an “attempt to create a narrative frame around the Ten Commandments, relating them to the foundational narrative of the people of Israel, from the Exodus to the possession of the promised land.”¹⁷⁹

We shall note two things here. First, the text corresponds generally with the Masoretic text, except for some wording corrections, and the evident change from Ebal to Gerizim from Dt. 27:4. The so-called sectarian changes did not imply an alteration of the text already contained in the Torah, only the insertion of other passages where the redactor deemed necessary for its comprehension. It is important to mention that these editorial changes found in the pre-Samaritan texts generally consisted of the use of Deuteronomy passages to harmonize Exodus and Numbers. Schorch suggests that the logical explanation is that the Gerizim commandment was redacted as a solution for discrepancies in the book of Exodus. Not just the mention of Gerizim is only attested in Deuteronomy, but the idea of the centralization of the cult also lacks in the book of Exodus and the law contained in Ex. 20:24-26 even contradicts it.¹⁸⁰ Then, Schorch argues, the so-called Gerizim commandment is not part of the Samaritan layer but had its origin in the same pre-Samaritan scribal circles.

¹⁷⁸ Knoppers, “Artared States,” p. 111; *Jews and Samaritans*, p. 206

¹⁷⁹ Stefan Schorch, “The So-Called Gerizim Commandment in the Samaritan Pentateuch,” in *The Samaritan Pentateuch and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Michaël Langlois (Ed.), Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology, 94 (Leuven Belgium: Peeters, 2019) p. 95.

¹⁸⁰ Schorch, “Construction of Samari(t)an Identity,” pp. 85-86.

The second thing is the omission of the ceremony of blessing and cursing at Mounts Ebal, and Gerizim contained both in Deuteronomy 5 and 11, reproducing only the set up of the stones and the erection of an altar at Mount Gerizim. This omission might indicate that the intention was not to provide a narrative frame as suggested by Schorch since the ceremonies after the entry to the land included the curses and blessings; instead, it reflects a concern with the place for Yahweh's altar. As Knoppers points out, by inserting passages from Deut 27 into the Ten Commandments both in Exod 20:13 and Deut 5, before the altar instructions of Exodus 20:24 and the centralization commands in Deuteronomy 12, "the writers effectively suggest a continuity of identity among the Covenant Code altar instructions, the Mt. Gerizim altar, and the central altar."¹⁸¹

Thus, the Gerizim commandment was not initially conceived as part of the Ten Commandments, as Samaritan tradition holds. Instead, the inclusion of text from Dt. 27 into in Ex. 20 and Dt. 5 intended to harmonize the text and eliminate contradictions. However, this does not rule out a Samaritan origin for this textual divergence. The insistence on the use of Deuteronomy for Pentateuchal Harmonization might be related with the same nature of this book, having been conceived as a centralized project was the natural selection as the base text for the corrections. Additionally, the choice of the Gerizim passage, specifically the verses related to the construction of the altar, suggests a Samaritan ideological background supporting the election of Gerizim and leaving aside any doubt of its precedence and legitimacy.

4. Conclusions

¹⁸¹ Knoppers, "Altared States," p. 111.

We have seen then three different stages of the process. The first goes from the fall of the kingdom of Israel to the fall of Judah. Some of the remaining Israelite population kept the Yawhist cult, and probably even absorbed part of the foreign population brought by the Assyrians who adopted the local traditions. During the Assyrian domination of the region, Judah began a process of development and expansion, accentuated after the partial decay of the Assyrians' power. The Yahwist nature of the northern population, and the relative abandonment of the highlands, encouraged ideological projects such as the Deuteronomistic one led by king Josiah, that sought for the Israelite unification under the rule of a Judahite dynasty and a cult centralization around its temple in Jerusalem. By the time Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed, it can hardly be said that these ideas managed to be widely extended among even Judah's population, and the existence of different sanctuaries must have persisted. However, those projects were rooted in the deported elites, especially among the priestly groups, who continued their development during their exile.

A second stage occurred during the Persian period when both Gerizim and Jerusalem temples were built, and the compilation of texts as a Torah was carried out. After the exile, the groups advocating for this centralization prevailed to some extent. However, among the priestly and scribal groups, there were differences regarding who was part of the group that worships at this one temple. While some of them, represented by the books of Chronicles and some prophets, longed for the reunification of all Israel and considered the Samaritan Yahwists as part of this group. Another party, outlined in Ezra and Nehemiah, pleaded the separation from other groups. Although the idea of cult centralization around a single sanctuary date from pre-exilic times, this was not a reality during the Persian period, and the coexistence of both temples was not precisely a cause of the rupture. Instead, we could speak of a fluctuating relationship between both priestly groups were, on the one hand, maintained good relations even marrying between them and, on the other, tried to impose over the rival sanctuary. The Torah is a good witness of this relationship showing an ambiguity regarding this matter, allowing different interpretations of both groups favoring their temples.

It was in a third phase, during the Hasmonean period, that the uniqueness of the sanctuary was reassumed to concentrate power around the temple of Jerusalem, whose high priests were the monarchs, and to exert pressure towards the periphery for its full integration into the kingdom of Judea; as a consequence of this, we have the destruction of the Gerizim temple during the campaigns of Hyrcanus. Even though we cannot consider the destruction of the temple as the exact moment in which the split between Samaritans and Jews occurred, it must be considered as the key moment when the foundations for that rupture were laid. The exclusion of the priesthood located at Mount Gerizim and the imposition of the Jerusalemite traditions on the Samaritan Yahwists established a relationship between a dominant and a dominated culture. This southern pressure caused a reaction from these groups reflected on the additions made to their version of the Torah. Even though these changes were part of a broader tradition of text harmonization, the concerns around Gerizim as the chosen place are evident.

Hence, it was not the construction or destruction of any of the temples; instead, the physical concerns about the building; it was the alteration of its conception as a central element for both communities. If the destruction of the temple had been a traumatic event for the community of Gerizim, the reconstruction of its sacred place would have occupied an essential place among their hopes, whether historical or eschatological. The silence of Samaritan sources with respect of their temple, rather than suggest an actual inexistence of the precinct (discarded by the excavations in Gerizim), support the idea that the critical event leading to the separation between Samaritans and Jews was not the physical construction or destruction of the temple in Gerizim but the ideological turn regarding the centrality of the cult.

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