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Goshen

Goshen (MT *Gōšen*), or in most cases “the land of Goshen,” appears in the HB/OT in the Joseph story (Gen 45:10; 46:28, 34; 47:1, 4, 6, 27; 50:8) as well as in the exodus narrative (Exod 8:22; 9:26) where it designates a place in Egypt in which the Hebrews are dwelling. The reference to the land of Goshen in Josh 10:41 and 11:16 may refer to the same region, whereas 15:51 seems to designate a town in Judah.

The biblical description of Goshen is rather ambiguous. In the Joseph narrative it is a prosperous land suitable for the grazing of livestock and the cultivation of crops. In the two references in the book of Exodus, Goshen seems to be a separate region, a reserve in which only the Hebrews live and which YHWH does not strike with his plagues (for the idea of segregation see also Gen 46:34). Since the beginnings of Egyptology there has been a discussion about the identification of Goshen (Van Seters: 266–69). Naville’s proposal to identify Goshen with Egyptian *Gsm* (see also Γεσημ in LXX), a name that appears in geographic texts in the 8th century BCE and then in the Saite Period (672–525) as the name of a nome of Lower Egypt is still accepted by the majority of scholars. Since the Joseph story was probably written not earlier than the 6th or 5th century BCE it is quite possible to imagine that the writer adapted the Egyptian term for his story. Other proposals of identification have been made. According to Rabinowitz and Redford Goshen should be related to Geshem (Gashmu), a North Arabian ruler of the 5th century BCE (in some places LXX has indeed Γεσημ Ἀραβίας; for Geshem see Neh 2:19; 6:1–2, 6), but this seems rather unlikely. Görg’s proposal to understand Goshen as a word play on the Egyptian expression *t3n qsn.t* (“land of misery/hunger”) is also speculative. His idea could however indicate the possibility that Goshen in Genesis and Exodus is an “invented” term. The adaption of Egyptian *Gsm* remains, however, the easiest solution. The parallel statements in Josh 10:41 and 11:41 can be understood as referring to the “Egyptian” Goshen as both texts are late theological constructions highlighting Joshua’s victories which included the land of Israel’s former enslavement (Knauf: 110). The town mentioned in Josh 15:51 (LXX Γοσομ) probably points to a place in the hill country of Judah which, despite several attempts, has not been satisfactorily identified (de Vos: 429–30).

Since the Europeans who founded the United States of America considered themselves as the “new Israel” it is not astonishing that in more than

twenty States there are towns called “Goshen,” alluding probably to the biblical image of fertility and divine protection. The same holds true for the name of Goshen that is used all over the world for organic farms or health-food companies. The expression “Land O Goshen” used in the Southern States of the USA is an exclamation of amazement or frustration. It may reflect the ambiguous meaning of Goshen in the Bible: a place of oppression and a place in the promised land. Goshen is also the name of a blues band in Santa Fe, and the name of a song by the group “Beirut.” In the history of art, Goshen plays a role in the work of Robert Talbot Kelly (1861–1934), who was part of the British orientalism movement. He stayed in Egypt for several years where he wrote a book in which he identified the land of Goshen, which was the theme of several of his paintings.

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Goshen-Gottstein, Moshe Henry

Philologist Goshen-Gottstein (1925–1991) was born in Berlin and immigrated to Israel in 1939, where he completed all of his higher education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He taught Bible and Semitic linguistics at the Hebrew University from 1950 until 1991, and also served as a faculty member at Bar-Ilan University from 1970 on. Goshen-Gottstein was an accomplished philologist and linguist, and applied these areas of expertise to the text-critical analysis of the HB and its translations. He was the founding general editor of the Hebrew University Bible Project (in 1956), a diplomatic *editio maior* of the books of the HB based upon the Aleppo Codex, and served in this role until his death. He was the editor of the HUBP Isaiah volume (1975–1995) and co-editor (with S. Talmon) of the Ezekiel volume (2004). He was also the founder of the Institute for the History of Jewish Bible Research at Bar-Ilan University (1972) and served as its chair until his death. The Institute has published a dozen books related to the history of Jewish interpretation and transmission of the Bible.

Goshen-Gottstein made important contributions to the study of the ancient translations, in-