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Cult Centralization and the Publication of the Torah Between Jerusalem and Samaria

Some decades ago Peter Frei postulated the existence of a Persian policy of ‘imperial authorization’ of local law codes. He suggested that occasionally, the central administration would have bestowed local legal documents with imperial authority. Together with K. Koch, he proposed that the publication of the Pentateuch and its acceptance as ‘Torah’ in Yehud should be viewed as an example of such imperial authorization.¹ The imperial administration would have encouraged Judeans to codify their traditional customs into an authoritative document, which it would subsequently have ratified.

Several scholars accepted the theory that such an ‘imperial authorization’ instigated the publication of the Pentateuch.² However, more recently, this explanation has been criticized.³ There are indeed quite few inscriptions dealing with specific legal matters, which often are written in two or three languages. The only partial parallel to an ‘imperial authorization’ would be the so-called ‘codification’ of Egyptian law under Darius I, but this latter case is quite different and the text it is based on makes no mention of the codification of law.

1 Peter Frei, “Zentralgewalt und Lokalautonomie im Achämenidenreich,” in *Reichsidee und Reichsorganisation im Perserreich*, ed. Peter Frei and Klaus Koch, OBO 55 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996).

2 Frank Crüsemann, *Die Tora: Theologie und Sozialgeschichte des alttestamentlichen Gesetzes* (München: Chr. Kaiser, 1992); Rainer Albertz, *From the Exile to the Maccabees*, vol. 2 of *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (London: SCM Press, 1992); Ernst A. Knauf, “Audiatur et altera pars. Zur Logik der Pentateuchredaktion,” *BK* 53 (1998): 118–26; Joseph Blenkinsopp, “Was the Pentateuch the Civic and Religious Constitution of the Jewish Ethnos in the Persian Period?” in *Persia and Torah. The Theory of the Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch*, ed. James W. Watts, SBL Symposium Series 17 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001): 41–62; Kyong-Jin Lee, *The Authority and Authorization of the Torah in the Persian Period*, CBET 64 (Leuven: Peeters, 2011).

3 Udo Rütterswörden, “Die persische Reichsautorisation der Thora: fact or fiction,” *ZABR* 1 (1995): 47–61; Gary N. Knoppers, “An Achaemenid Imperial Authorization of Torah in Yehud?” in *Persia and Torah: The Theory of the Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch*, ed. James W. Watts, SBL Symposium Series 17 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001): 115–34; Jean-Louis Ska, “‘Persian Imperial Authorization’: Some Question Marks,” in *Persia and Torah: The Theory of the Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch*, ed. James W. Watts, SBL Symposium Series 17 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001): 161–82.

Therefore, one should probably search for more ‘internal’ explanations for compilation of the Pentateuch. In this context, the Pentateuch is often viewed as a document of compromise between different scribal schools in Jerusalem during the fourth century BCE or maybe even later.⁴ Different groups agreed to bring the different traditions they regarded as authoritative – for example, the Priestly writing – and to combine them to create a normative account or a foundation myth of the origins of ‘Israel.’ That normative account, while it preserved conflicting views, was nevertheless unified by a comprehensive narrative framework stretching from the origins of the world (Genesis 1) to the death of the divine mediator, Moses (Deuteronomy 34), with this Moses being its main figure.⁵

It is often claimed that the Torah was composed in Jerusalem. Recent archaeological investigation about the population of Yehud and Jerusalem in the Persian period reveal however that Jerusalem was only very sparsely inhabited during this time.⁶ Of course, one cannot exclude that some priests and scribes around the Temple were enough to compose the Pentateuch. But one should also take into account the political and economic strength of the Babylonian and the Egyptian Diaspora. Even if the story of Ezra bringing a ‘law’ from Mesopotamia to Jerusalem in Ezra 7 is totally invented,⁷ it reflects in one way or another the implication of the Babylonian Diaspora in the compilation of the Torah.

It seems clear now that there was a (Yahwistic) sanctuary on mount Gerizim built probably after the resettlement of Shechem circa 480–475 BCE,⁸ if not ear-

4 See the different contributions in Gary N. Knoppers and Bernard M. Levinson, eds., *The Pentateuch as Torah: New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007). See also the summary of the recent discussion in Thomas Römer, “Der Pentateuch,” in Walter Dietrich et al., *Die Entstehung des Alten Testaments*, Theologische Wissenschaft 1 (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2014), 69–89.

5 Rolf P. Knierim, “The Composition of the Pentateuch,” in *SBL Seminar Papers 24* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985): 393–415.

6 See the discussion between Israel Finkelstein, “The Territorial Extent and Demography of Yehud/Judea in the Persian and Early Hellenistic Periods,” *RB* 117 (2010): 39–54, and Oded Lipschits, “Demographic Changes in Judah between the Seventh and the Fifth Centuries B.C.E.,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, ed. Oded Lipschits and Joseph Blenkinsopp (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003): 323–76.

7 According to Sebastian Grätz, *Das Edikt des Artaxerxes: Eine Untersuchung zum religionspolitischen und historischen Umfeld von Esra 7,12–26*, BZAW 337 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), this text was composed only during the Hellenistic period.

8 Yitzhak Magen, “Mount Gerizim – Temple City,” *Qadmoniot* 120 (2000): 74–118; Ephraim Stern and Yitzhak Magen, “Archaeological Evidence for the First Stage of the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim,” *IEJ* 52 (2002): 49–57.

lier, so that it is even possible that the Temple of Jerusalem and the sanctuary on Gerizim where built more or less at the same time, both apparently tolerated by the Persian administration. If the Pentateuch had originated only in Judah and the Golah it is hardly understandable why the Samaritans would have adopted this document. The very negative picture about Samaria and its governor Sanballat in the book of Nehemiah does probably not reflect a situation of the beginning of the 5th century BCE, but points to a much later date. The documentation from Elephantine shows that the Judeans living there wrote simultaneously to the governors of Jerusalem and of Samaria concerning the question of the rebuilding of the Yahu-Temple. They received as an answer a common statement of Bagavahyah, governor of Judah and of Delaiah the son of the governor of Samaria, Sanballat.

This suggests a friendly relationship between Samaria and Jerusalem at the end of the 5th century BCE,⁹ at a time where the sanctuary on Gerizim probably already existed. One could suspect, as suggested by Granerød that the Judean and Samaritan leaders had some extraterritorial authority in religious questions over the Judeans (and Israelites?) in Elephantine.¹⁰ Apparently, the Yhwh-worshippers in Elephantine considered that the leaders of Judah and Samaria had some common influence over the rebuilding of the Yhwh-sanctuary and other cultic concerns. These observations indicate a close collaboration between Jerusalem and Samaria. If there was such a contact, it seems quite plausible that it should have applied also to the promulgation of the Pentateuch. How should we then imagine this collaboration? And how does the idea of cult centralization fit to the fact that at the time of the promulgation of the Pentateuch there were at least two sanctuaries of Yhwh?

A Northern Origin of the Book of Deuteronomy?

Recent scholarship about the question of Samaritan implication in the compilation of the Pentateuch has paid much attention to the book of Deuteronomy. In this context, some scholars take up again a quite old idea of the Northern origin of Deuteronomy, making it a “Proto-Samaritan” manifesto. There is no need to summarize the whole discussion. This has been done in a recent volume of “Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel,” especially in the review of scholarship by Cyn-

⁹ Gard Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism in the Persian Period: Studies in the Religion and Society of the Judaean Community at Elephantine*, BZAW 488 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 41–44.

¹⁰ Granerød, *Dimensions of Yahwism*, 43.

thia Edenburg and Reinhard Müller.¹¹ A major question is how to understand Deuteronomy's claim about the place that Yhwh will choose for himself. Stefan Schorch has argued for a Northern origin of the first edition of Deuteronomy arguing that the centralization law in Deuteronomy 12 referred to the altar in Gerizim mentioned in Deuteronomy 27.¹²

This theory however is problematic in two regards. First, the Northern origin of Deuteronomy can be ruled out with a high degree of probability. The strong parallels between the earliest texts of the book of Deuteronomy and the Loyalty oath of Esarhaddon (VTE) suggest that the authors of the "Ur-Deuteronomium" knew this text.¹³ That means that we can establish a *terminus a quo* in 672 BCE. And as Levinson and Stackert have pointed out the recently discovered copy of this Succession treaty at Tell Tayinat "confirms the Assyrian employment of this text with its western vassals."¹⁴ It is therefore very plausible that there was a copy of this treaty in the Temple of Jerusalem.¹⁵ The second problem is the assumption that Deuteronomy 12 refers to Deuteronomy 27. Or, as shown by Na'aman, Nihan, and others, Deuteronomy 27 is quite probably an insert between chapters 26 and 28, because it interrupts the continuity between chapters 26 and 28.¹⁶ Moses speaks here in the 3rd person, together with the elders (v. 1) and the Levites (v. 9). This scenario is not at all prepared in the foregoing chapter. If Deuteronomy 27 is an addition, probably added in several stages, the same holds true for Deut 11:29–32.¹⁷ If this diachronic analysis has some plausibility,

11 Cynthia Edenburg and Reinhard Müller, "A Northern Provenance for Deuteronomy? A Critical Review," *HeBAI* 4 (2015): 148–61.

12 Stefan Schorch, "The Samaritan Version of Deuteronomy and the Origin of Deuteronomy," in *Samaria, Samaritans, Samaritans. Studies on Bible, History and Linguistics*, ed. József Zsengellér, SJ 66; StSam 6 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011): 23–37.

13 Hans Ulrich Steymans, *Deuteronomium 28 und die adé zur Thronfolgeregelung Asarhaddons: Segen und Fluch im Alten Orient und in Israel*, OBO 145 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995).

14 Bernard M. Levinson and Jeffrey Stackert, "Between Covenant Code and Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty: Deuteronomy 13 and the Composition of Deuteronomy," *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 3 (2012): 132.

15 See also Hans Ulrich Steymans, "Deuteronomy 28 and Tell Tayinat," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 34 (2013): 13.

16 Nadav Na'aman, "The Law of the Altar in Deuteronomy and the Cultic Site Near Shechem," in *Rethinking the Foundations. Historiography in the Ancient World and in the Bible: Essays in Honour of John Van Seters*, ed. Steven L. McKenzie and Thomas Römer, BZAW 294 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000): 141–61; Christophe Nihan, "Garizim et Ébal dans le Pentateuque: Quelques remarques en marge de la publication d'un nouveau fragment du Deutéronome," *Sem* 54 (2011): 185–210.

17 Edenburg and Müller, "Northern Provenance," 158.

the question of the identity of the chosen place in Deuteronomy 12 must be answered differently. Deuteronomy 12 insists several times on the fact that Yhwh will choose or has chosen for himself one place; the topic of the chosen place then appears as a refrain throughout the whole Deuteronomistic Law (altogether 20 occurrences).

The Centralization Law in Deut 12:13–18

I will not discuss in detail the literary stratigraphy of this chapter. There are still good arguments that the oldest version of the topic of the chosen place which occurs 20 times inside the Deuteronomistic Law is contained in verses 13–18.¹⁸ Contrary to the MT that has the *yiqtol*-form *yibḥar*, the Samaritan text constantly displays the *qatal*-form of *baḥar*. As Schenker has shown the Samaritan text is supported by textual witnesses from the LXX, the Old Latin, and the Coptic, so that we clearly do not have a late sectarian revision, but a tradition that competes with the Masoretic one.¹⁹ The Samaritan reading is also supported by Neh 1:9, which presents itself as a quote from Moses' speech, and uses the *qatal*-form: "I will gather them from there and bring them to the place at which I have chosen to establish my name אֶבְרָחָם וְהַבְּוֹאִתִּים אֱלֹהֵי־מָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר בַּחֲרֵי אֲשֶׁר אֶבְרָחָם (לְשׂוֹן אֶת־שְׁמִי שָׁם)." If the *qatal*-form is older, as Schenker argues, what would be the consequence? Would a *qatal*-form exclude the identification of the *maqom* with Jerusalem in Deuteronomy 12? This is clearly not the case. In many instances in Deuteronomy the *qatal*-form expresses the idea of a future action, which is prior to another action in the future.²⁰ Deut 16:17, for instance, alludes to future divine blessing when the people will be in the land: "all shall give as they are able, according to the blessing Yhwh your God will have given to you (אִישׁ כַּמַּתְנֵת יָדוֹ בְּכִרְבַּת יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר נָתַן־לְךָ). A similar use of the *qatal* occurs in Deut 28:20, where Moses announces that Israel's abandonment of Yhwh will only take place after the conquest of the land: "because of the evil of your deeds, through which you will have abandoned me (מִפְּנֵי רַע מַעֲלִיךָ אֲשֶׁר עֲזַבְתָּנִי)."

¹⁸ Thomas Römer, *The So-Called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), 56–65.

¹⁹ Adrian Schenker, "Le Seigneur choisira-t-il le lieu de son nom ou l'a-t-il choisi? L'apport de la Bible grecque ancienne à l'histoire du texte samaritain et massorétique," in *Scripture in Transition: Essays on Septuagint, Hebrew Bible, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Raija Sollamo*, ed. Jutta Jokiranta and Anssi Voitila (Leiden: Brill, 2008): 339–51.

²⁰ Innocent Himbaza, "Le lieu que Yhwh aura choisi': Une perspective narrative, historique et philologique," *Sem* 58 (2016): 115–34.

Accordingly, in Deuteronomy 12, the *qatal*-form can indicate a choice that has taken place in Yhwh's mind but will be revealed later. We need to ask, however, how the differences between the MT and the SP are to be explained? In my view this is related to the broader context in which Deuteronomy 12 was thought to be read and understood. Before addressing this point, I would like to reassert that the chosen place in Deuteronomy 12, and especially in 12:13–18 was originally meant to be Jerusalem. The passage first opposes the totality or multitude of sacred places (*kol-maqom*) to the sanctuary that Yhwh will choose in only one tribe. This statement is a quite clear allusion to the Josianic reform. The “one tribe” out of which Yhwh will elect the place for his sanctuary can only be Judah. The same ideology can be found in Psalm 78, where Yhwh refuses to choose Ephraim (the North), but chooses “the tribe of Judah, the mountain of Zion which he loves (ויבחר את־שבט יהודה את־הר ציון אשר אהב)” (v. 68). The author of Deut 12:13–18 takes up the tradition of the election of Zion and transforms it into an exclusive election, which does not allow any other sanctuary. Finally, the above-mentioned text in Neh 1:9 which alludes in the *qatal*-form to Yhwh's chosen place clearly witnesses the identification of the place of Jerusalem.²¹ Why is Jerusalem then not mentioned?

It is somewhat astonishing that Deut 12:13–18 is mainly concerned with the practical consequences of the centralization law (the so-called ‘profane slaughter’) and that there is not much insistence on the theological explanation of this centralization. In an article, that has not received much scholarly attention, Lohfink had assumed that the version of Deut 12:13–18 has replaced a somewhat older form of the centralization law, which we are unable to reconstruct.²² This sounds quite speculative but it is possible that if Deut 12:13–18 was originally not conceived as a Moses speech, but a kind of a royal or divine decree, Jerusalem or Zion could have been mentioned. The name of the chosen place would have been removed when Deuteronomy was constructed as Moses' last will and became the opening of the so-called Deuteronomistic History.

²¹ Magnar Kartveit, “The Place that the Lord Your God Will Choose,” *HeBAI* 4 (2015): 205–18.

²² Norbert Lohfink, “Fortschreibung? Zur Technik von Rechtsrevisionen im deuteronomischen Bereich, erörtert an Deuteronomium 12, Ex 21,2–11 und Dtn 15,12–18,” in *Das Deuteronomium und seine Deutungen*, ed. Timo Veijola, Schriften der Finnischen Exegetischen Gesellschaft 62 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996): 127–71.

The Centralization Law in the Context of the Deuteronomistic History

The redactors of the Deuteronomistic History were of course convinced that the Jerusalemite temple was indeed the only legitimate place of Yhwh worship. For that reason, all the Northern kings are heavily condemned and the ‘original sin’ of Jeroboam is the foundation of competing Yhwh sanctuaries in Bethel and Dan (1 Kings 12). However, they had also to cope with the fact that in the older traditions that they integrated in their history other cultic places for Yhwh worship occurred that had no negative connotations. This was especially the case for Shiloh related to the Samuel and Ark traditions. Apparently the Deuteronomists found a compromise for their idea of centralization. They admitted that in the pre-monarchic times, before the construction of the Jerusalemite Temple, there was another chosen place, Shiloh. When Deuteronomy became the opening of the Deuteronomistic History the *qatal*-form of בחר in Deuteronomy 12 was then changed into a *yiqtol* in order to suggest the idea that Yhwh may choose different sanctuaries in the future.

In an exilic or postexilic perspective this idea was even easier to accept since Shiloh had been destroyed centuries before the destruction of the First Temple.²³ The theory that Yhwh did choose Shiloh before Jerusalem is clearly set out in Jeremiah 7, which in my view is a text that had been revised if not written by a “Deuteronomist.” In Jeremiah’s temple speech, the prophet in announcing the destruction of the Temple and in comparing it to Jerusalem uses a formula, which is reminiscent of Deuteronomy 12:

¹²Go now to my place (מקומי) that was in Shiloh, where I made my name dwell at first (אשר שכנתי שמי שם בראשונה), and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.¹³ And now, because you have done all these things, says Yhwh, and when I spoke to you persistently, you did not listen, and when I called you, you did not answer,¹⁴ therefore I will do to the house that is called by my name (אשר נקרא-שמי), in which you trust, and to the place that I gave to you and to your ancestors, just what I did to Shiloh. (Jer 7:12–14)

In regard to the narrative construction of the Deuteronomistic History, the Deuteronomists could accept the idea that there were “legitimate” Yhwh-sanctuaries before the construction of the Jerusalemite Temple, even Northern ones. This idea of a prior divine choice, which was then revoked, can be compared to the election of Saul, who was then rejected because of David. Once the Temple of Jer-

²³ See Israel Finkelstein, “Seilun, Khirbet,” *ABD* 5: 1069–72.

usalem was built, all other sanctuaries, especially the Northern ones were of course criticized.

Summing up, in the context of the Deuteronomistic History, the centralization law in Deut 12:13–18 still means the Jerusalemite Temple and this was made clear by the addition of verses 8–12, which introduce the idea of the ‘rest,’ alluding to the construction of the Temple. When the book of Deuteronomy was cut off from the books of Joshua-Kings and became the end of the Torah, things changed.

The Centralization Law in the Context of the Pentateuch

If we accept the idea that the Torah is not only a Judean and Babylonian production we need to look for ‘Samaritan voices’ and probably not only Judean concessions to the Samaritans, although those certainly also exist. One of those concessions can be the subtle reformulation of Deut 12:14 in 12:5. Most scholars would agree that Deut 12:2–7 belong to the latest revision of Deuteronomy 12, and it is possible that this revision took place when Deuteronomy had already become the last scroll of the Pentateuch. Contrary to Deut 12:14, which announces that Yhwh will choose his place from only one tribe, Deut 12:5 speaks about a choice out of all tribes:

12:14

כי אם־במקום אשר־יבחר יהוה באחד שבטיך

12:5

כי אם־אל־המקום אשר־יבחר יהוה אלהיכם מכל־שבטיכם

The idea that Yhwh can choose his place out of all the tribes allows for the possibility to understand the chosen place as referring to a different place than Jerusalem. Deuteronomy 12:2–7 adopt a very intolerant position towards the sanctuaries of the people that need to be destroyed, but apparently allows for a more open interpretation as for the place or places of legitimate Yhwh-worship.

One Place or Many Places: Deuteronomy 12, Exodus 20, and Exodus 25 – 31, 35 – 40

When Deuteronomy was added to the Pentateuch, the Deuteronomic law went into competition with the “Covenant Code” in Exodus 21–22. Although it may be possible that the earliest form of Deuteronomy 12–26 had been created to re-

place the Covenant Code,²⁴ the editors of the Pentateuch made the choice to integrate both codes into the Torah.²⁵

The Covenant Code, whose original opening was probably “These are the ordinances you shall set before them” (Exod 21:1), has been expanded by the addition of Exod 20:22–26 immediately before it, to become the new opening of the work. It begins “Thus Yhwh said to Moses: Thus you shall say to the Israelites” (v. 22).²⁶ The section deals, after the prohibition of images (v. 23), with the building of sacrificial altars, and Yahweh promises to come and bless the people at *every place* he causes his ‘name’ to be remembered. In this way, the opening of the Covenant Code is made parallel to the Deuteronomistic Code,²⁷ which begins with the stipulation by Yhwh that he will select a single place for sacrificial offerings to be made to him.

At the same time, however, Exod 20:24–26 might be seen to correct the ‘single altar’ claim of Deuteronomy by allowing the legitimate construction of other sacrificial altars in places of worship wherever Yhwh worshippers live, assuming the unit post-dates Deuteronomy 12.

Exod 20:24	בכל־המקום אשר אזכיר את־שמי אבוא אליך וברכתך
Deut 12:14	במקום אשר־יבחר יהוה באחד שבטיך
Deut 12:4	אל־המקום אשר־יבחר יהוה אלהיכם מכל־שבטיכם לשום את־שמו שם

It is indeed possible that Exod 20:22–26 was added in a late stage of the process of the promulgation of the Pentateuch, maybe by a group that wanted to offer an

²⁴ Bernard M. Levinson, *Deuteronomy and the Hermeneutics of Legal Innovation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Eckart Otto, *Das Deuteronomium. Politische Theologie und Rechtsreform in Juda und Assyrien*, BZAW 284 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999).

²⁵ According to Johannes Unsok Ro, “The Portrayal of Judean Communities in Persian Era Palestine Through the Lens of the Covenant Code,” *Sem* 56 (2014): 249–89, the Covenant Code and the Deuteronomistic Code both emerged in the Persian period, in different socio-geographical contexts.

²⁶ Some authors see in v. 22* the original opening, and in 20:24–26 additions to the original *mishpatim*, as for instance Wolfgang Oswald, *Israel am Gottesberg: Eine Untersuchung zur Literaturgeschichte der vorderen Sinaiperikope Ex 19–24 und deren historischem Hintergrund*, OBO 159 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 111–12. For another solution see John Van Seters, “The Altar Law of Ex 20,24–26 in Critical Debate,” in *Auf dem Weg zur Endgestalt von Genesis bis II Regum. Festschrift für Hans-Christoph Schmitt zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Martin Beck and Ulrike Schorn, BZAW 370 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006): 157–74.

²⁷ See Eckart Otto, “Die Rechtshermeneutik des Pentateuch und die achämenidische Rechtsideologie in ihren altorientalischen Kontexten,” in *Kodifizierung und Legitimierung des Rechts in der Antike und im Alten Orient*, ed. Markus Witte and Marie Theres Fögen, BZABR 5 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006): 71–116.

alternative to the Deuteronomic centralization law and to allow for several Yhwh sanctuaries. The redactors of Exod 20:24–26 tried in this way to legitimate the existence of altars in diaspora communities outside ‘the Land’ while endorsing two single sites within that territory—at Mount Gerizim for the residents of Samaria and at Jerusalem for the residents of Yehud.

A similar strategy can be detected in the Priestly account of the construction of the mobile sanctuary in Exodus 25–31 and 35–40. This mobile sanctuary can easily be identified with different sanctuaries: For the Judeans, it can be read as alluding to the Jerusalemite Temple, whereas for the Samaritans, it is possible to see the sanctuary as foreshadowing their Temple on Gerizim. If this is the case, one could imagine that the ‘Priestly document’ (P) did perhaps not only originate in Yehud. Maybe P should be seen as a ‘mixed’ group of priests from Samaria and from Jerusalem.²⁸ Flavius Josephus reports that dissident priests from Jerusalem, who disagreed with the measures of Ezra and Nehemiah, founded the temple of Gerizim.²⁹ Although his presentation is more ideological than historical, it acknowledges a relation between the priesthood from Gerizim and from Jerusalem. According to Neh 13:28 the son of Eliashib, the high priest of Jerusalem, was married with the daughter of the Samaritan governor Sanballat.³⁰ We should therefore change our view about the origin of the Pentateuch.

It is not a Judean and Babylonian production that was then adopted by the Samaritans. Our present knowledge of the archeological and historical facts requires, as Ingrid Hjelm puts it “new scenarios that present the Samaritans on Gerizim as (co-)authors, rather than as receivers of a fully formed tradition.”³¹ That means we should not only speak of ‘concessions’ made to the Samaritans but imagine a more intensive redaction of the Pentateuch from the Samaritan side, or at least from a mixed group of Judeans and Samaritans. In the following I just would like to offer two examples of a possible Samaritan revision of the nascent Torah. I will not deal with Deuteronomy 27 because this text has largely been analyzed and commented in recent publications.³² I will rather offer some

28 For a similar idea, see Walter Houston, “Between Salem and Mount Gerizim: The Context of the Formation of the Torah Reconsidered,” *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 5 (2014): 311–34.

29 Josephus, *Ant.* 11.309–312; 11.346.

30 See also Josephus, *Ant.* 11:302–312.

31 Ingrid Hjelm, “Northern Perspectives in Deuteronomy and Its Relation to the Samaritan Pentateuch,” *HeBAI* 4 (2015): 193.

32 See Na’aman, “Law of the Altar;” Nihan, “Garizim;” Detlef Jericke, “Der Berg Garizim im Deuteronomium,” *ZAW* 124 (2012): 213–28; Gary N. Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans: The Origins and History of their Early Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 206–8.

comments on a ‘Shechem frame’ and a possible ‘Samaritan-connection’ in the Joseph-novella.

The Shechem-frame of the Hexa- and Pentateuch

The first stop that Abraham makes in the land of Canaan where he receives his first divine revelation, is at Shechem at the oak of More, and here he builds his first altar (Gen 12:6–7). Scholars traditionally explain Abraham’s link with Shechem with the assumption that the passage about Abraham’s travel into the land of Canaan in Gen 12:1–9 takes up important places from the Jacob tradition and relates those also to Abraham. But interestingly Abraham’s second stop is between ‘Bethel and Ai,’ and not in Bethel; and Ai does not play any role in the Jacob narrative. Therefore, one may consider an alternative explanation and postulate that the beginning of the Abraham narrative was reworked in a pro-Samaritan perspective. Read in the light of Exod 20:24–26 Abraham’s altar in Shechem is the first place that Yhwh has chosen for his cult. There is a hint to the reference to Shechem at the very end of the Pentateuch when Moses is allowed to see the Promised Land, which he cannot enter. The repetition of the land promise in Deut 34:4 is indeed a quotation of Yhwh’s promise to Abraham in Shechem:

Gen 12:7	לזרעך אתן את-הארץ הזאת
Deut 34:4	הארץ אשר נשבעתי לאברהם ליצחק וליעקב לאמר לזרעך אתננה

Interestingly the Samaritan Pentateuch has a very different description of the land that Moses is allowed to contemplate: “from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river of Euphrates, unto the utmost Sea.” This large description, absent from the MT of Deut 34:2–3, has a more inclusive view of the Promised Land including Diaspora locations in Mesopotamia and also in Egypt. It is possible that the description centered on the land and tribes of Israel in Deut 34:2–3 MT is a later correction of the ‘unrealistic view’ of Moses according to the SP.

The Shechem location is even more obvious at the end of the book of Joshua. In Joshua 24, Joshua enacts the divine laws and the ‘book of the law of God’ at Shechem. The link with Gen 12:7 is made evident by the mention of the ‘oak’ in 24:26.³³ As I have argued elsewhere Joshua 24 was created in order to produce a

³³ The MT plural reading is a tendentious attempt to play down the holy character of the oak. The original reading, attested by the Greek, is the singular.

Hexateuch, and to integrate the book of Joshua into the Torah.³⁴ The Northern, ‘Samaritan’ location of Joshua 24 can hardly be a Judean invention. This is also shown by the LXX, which reads Shiloh instead of Shechem and reflects a Hebrew text from the second or first century presupposing the so-called “schism” between both groups after the destruction of the sanctuary of Gerizim.³⁵ We should see Josh 24 therefore probably as a co-production of Samaritans and Judeans, if not a pure Samaritan version. Although the idea of a Hexateuch could not be materialized in a Torah containing six scrolls, the figure of Joshua remained popular among the Samaritans, as shown by the Samaritan Chronicle of Joshua.³⁶

A Samaritan ‘Shechem revision’ is maybe also perceptible in Genesis 22. In this text God asks Abraham to go to the land “Moriah” and to sacrifice Isaac on of the mountain that God will indicate to him. Scholars generally argue that Moriah in Genesis 22 is an allusion to Jerusalem since in 2 Chr 3:1 the temple mount is called ‘Mount Moriah.’ But it is not clear at all that this text was in the mind of the author or redactor who added this geographical indication in Gen 22:2. As Nihan has argued in a forthcoming article, ‘Moriah’ in Genesis 22 may have a link with Shechem, and the Samaritan המורה allude to the oak of Shechem in Gen 12:6 (SP: אֵלֶּן מוֹרִיאַ). The Masoretic spelling (הַמְרִיָּה) could have been introduced at the same time that 2 Chr 3:1 was written. But it is quite possible that a Samaritan editor of the Pentateuch added the location Moriah in Gen 22; by doing so he wanted to suggest that the place of Abraham’s sacrifice was identical with the place where he built already an altar when he arrived in the Land.

The Joseph Novella and Its Possible Northern, Samaritan Connections

Let us return for a moment to Joshua 24. At the end of that chapter the author reports the burying of Joseph’s bones in Shechem (24:32). This action brings to an end a motif that occurs at the end of the Joseph story in Gen 50:26, and appears again in Exod 13:19, when the Israelites leave Egypt. In recent scholarship

³⁴ Thomas Römer, “Das doppelte Ende des Josuabuches: einige Anmerkungen zur aktuellen Diskussion um ‘deuteronomistisches Geschichtswerk’ und ‘Hexateuch,’” *ZAW* 118 (2006): 523–48. See also Thomas Römer and Marc Z. Brettler, “Deuteronomy 34 and the Case for a Persian Hexateuch,” *JBL* 119 (2000): 401–19.

³⁵ Pace Ernst A. Knauf, *Josua*, ZBK.AT 6. (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2008), 195.

³⁶ Ingrid Hjelm, *The Samaritans and Early Judaism: A Literary Analysis*, JSOTSup 303 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 241–44.

there is a trend to understand the Joseph story as a Diaspora novella that would have been written down in order to legitimate the existence of an Egyptian diaspora.³⁷ The question remains, however, why Joseph is a “Northern” figure. In the prophetic books ‘Joseph’ or the ‘house of Joseph’ is indeed used to designate the North. And in Gen 41:51–52, Joseph becomes indeed the father of Ephraim and Manasseh. This Northern setting has sometimes been explained with the idea that the Joseph story could have originated in Elephantine, a colony that according to some scholars could have had Northern origins.³⁸ But the location of the Joseph story in Elephantine is not clear at all, nor is the presupposed Northern origin of the colony.

Another option would be to relate the Joseph narrative to a ‘Samaritan’ diaspora. According to Flavius Josephus there were also Samaritans living in Egypt during the Hellenistic time and perhaps earlier from the end of the Persian era onward.³⁹ He also reports that under Ptolemy VI (180–145 BCE) there was a conflict between Jews and Samaritans living together in Alexandria about the question of whether the Temple of Jerusalem or the sanctuary on Gerizim had been built according to the prescriptions the Torah.⁴⁰ Andronicus, speaking for Jerusalem “persuaded the king to decide that the temple in Jerusalem had been built in accordance with the laws of Moses.”⁴¹ If those tensions between Judeans and Samaritans arose only in the second century BCE, we might assume that there was a quite pacific cohabitation of both groups in Egypt in late Persian and early Hellenistic times. If this were the case the Joseph story could have been originated in a Samaritan context. When it was inserted into the Torah, the role of Judah was strengthened in order to create a balance between the North and the South. Admittedly these are speculations, but we need to investigate more seriously texts in the Torah that possibly have a Northern, Samaritan background.

37 Thomas Römer, “Joseph approché. Source du cycle, corpus, unite,” in *Le livre de traverse: De l'exégèse biblique à l'anthropologie*, ed. Oliver Abel and Françoise Smyth, Patrimoines (Paris: Cerf., 1992): 73–85; Alessandro Catastini, *Storia di Giuseppe (Genesi 37–50)* (Venezia: Marsilio, 1994); Jean-Marie Husser, “L’histoire de Joseph,” in *La Bible et sa culture: Ancien Testament*, ed. Michel Quesnel and Philippe Gruson (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2000): 112–22; Christoph Uehlinger, “Fratricide, filiations et paternités dans l’histoire de Joseph (Genèse 37–50*),” in *Jacob: Commentaire à plusieurs voix de Gen. 25–36. Mélanges offerts à Albert de Pury*, ed. Jean-Daniel Macchi and Thomas Römer, MdB 44 (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2001): 303–28.

38 Karel van der Toorn, “Anat-Yahu, Some Other Deities, and the Jews of Elephantine,” *Numen* 39 (1992): 80–101.

39 Josephus, *Ant.* 11.321–322; 12.7–10.

40 Josephus, *Ant.* 13.74–79.

41 Josephus, *Ant.* 13.79.

Conclusion

The centralization formula arose in a seventh-century “Urdeuteronomium,” which was not a Northern but a Judean scroll, in order to demonstrate that the only legitimate sanctuary for sacrificing to Yhwh was the Temple of Jerusalem. When Deuteronomy became the opening of the so-called DtrH, the Deuteronomistic redactors had to explain the fact that before the construction of the Temple, Yhwh had been worshipped in other places. The Deuteronomistic temple speech in Jeremiah 7 claims that Yhwh did choose another sanctuary before Jerusalem, Shiloh. But just as Shiloh had been destroyed, the Temple in Jerusalem could also be put to ashes. In the context of the Pentateuch, the centralization law in Deuteronomy 12 is in tension with the introduction to the Covenant Code in Exod 20:24–26 which allows for a diversity of chosen places. A similar strategy can be found in the Priestly idea of a mobile sanctuary, which could be understood as a prototype for the Jerusalem Temple, but also for the Temple of Gerizim. This possibility of ‘double entendre’ can perhaps be explained by the idea that the Priestly authors were not only Judean but also Samaritan priests. Samaritan interventions can also be detected in the importance given to Shechem in the beginning of the Abraham narrative and in Joshua 24. And finally we may ask whether the Joseph novella did arise in the context of a Samaritan diaspora in Egypt. Much further investigation is necessary. But we need to imagine for the Samaritans a more active role in the production of the Torah.