

THE SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH

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THE SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH
An Introduction to Its Origin, History,
and Significance for Biblical Studies

THE SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH

AN INTRODUCTION TO ITS ORIGIN, HISTORY,
AND SIGNIFICANCE FOR BIBLICAL STUDIES

by

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Atlanta

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
AnBib	Analecta biblica
ANYAS	Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences
BA	<i>Biblical Archeologist</i>
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BCH	<i>Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique</i>
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CSBS	Canadian Society of Biblical Studies
DJD	Discoveries in the Judean Desert
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
<i>EncJud</i>	<i>Encyclopaedia Judaica</i> . 2nd ed. 22 vols. New York: Macmillan, 2006.
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GAT	Grundrisse zum Alten Testament
<i>Hen</i>	<i>Henoch</i>
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
LUOSMS	Leeds University Oriental Society Monograph Series

MdB	Le Monde de la Bible
MGWJ	<i>Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums</i>
NIDNTT	<i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> . Edited by Colin Brown. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, 1975–1985.
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
POTTS	Pittsburgh Original Texts and Translations Series
RB	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
RBL	<i>Review of Biblical Literature</i>
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RTL	<i>Revue théologique de Louvain</i>
SAC	Spiro-Albright Correspondence
SBFCM	Studium Biblicum Franciscanum Collectio Maior
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SES	Société d'Études Samaritaines
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
StPB	Studia post-biblica
TSAJ	Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
TSK	<i>Theologische Studien und Kritiken</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

CREDITS

This book includes material incorporated from:

Benyamin Tsedaka and Sharon Sullivan, *The Israelite Version of the Torah: First English Translation Compared with the Masoretic Version*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012.

Robert T. Anderson and Terry Giles, *Tradition Kept: An Introduction to the Literature of the Samaritans*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005.

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INTRODUCTION

The Samaritan Pentateuch (SP) is the sacred text of the Samaritan community. That community, made famous to the West in the New Testament stories of the “good Samaritan” and the “woman at the well,” is of ancient origin, yet it persists to this day. Throughout its long history, the Samaritan community has always recognized as sacred only the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, the Pentateuch, but in a version quite distinct from the other two better known ancient versions of the Hebrew Bible: the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Septuagint (LXX). The SP shows its distinctiveness most noticeably through a number of scattered readings supporting the Samaritan insistence that worship be conducted on Mount Gerizim, recognized as God’s chosen site instead of Mount Zion in Jerusalem. Mount Gerizim is also venerated in the SP by means of a unique rendition of the Decalogue, giving validation to worship on this sacred mount no less authority than God’s own words. Less noticeably, the SP is differentiated from the MT and LXX by resisting an anthropomorphic representation of God, emphasizing the role of Moses, and preserving harmonistic editorial practices that, thanks to the witness from the scrolls recovered near the Dead Sea, are now known to be commonplace in the Second Temple period.

Like the Samaritan community itself, the SP has experienced all the vagaries of a troubled history. At times respected and fought over by those who sought to own its influence, at times dismissed and forced to wander in exile from its homeland, and at times all but ignored, the SP has persevered as the Samaritans themselves have. Since the seventeenth century, the majority of Western biblical scholarship has assigned the SP to a supportive and often minor role in the text-critical investigation of the Hebrew Bible. That role is changing.

Today the SP is assuming a central role in the critical examination of the textual history of the Bible. We now know that the SP and its predecessors played a vibrant part in the stream of textual witnesses to the Penta-

teuch prior to the turn of the eras. Recently, a growing appreciation for the pluriformity of the sacred text tradition in the Second Temple period, an appreciation that has shifted entire paradigms of scholarly investigation, has placed the SP at the heart of text criticism and canon studies. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the SP has been published parallel to the MT, critical editions have been reprinted, early manuscripts have been digitized, and an English translation has made the SP far more accessible than ever before. The time is right for a reintroduction.

The purpose of this volume is to synthesize current scholarship on the SP, and to present that synthesis in a fashion useful for nonspecialists. As a synthesis, this volume is deeply indebted to the work of many experts in the field. Especially over the last decade, Samaritan scholarship has burgeoned far beyond what can be summarized in the pages of this book. In crafting this survey, we have attempted to be accurate, fair, and inclusive, mindful that we are representing the work of our colleagues to a wider audience. Any exclusions or misrepresentations are unintentional. Further, given the recent accessibility to new archaeological and textual data, it is not surprising that scholarly opinions concerning the SP, its character, and its place in the text history of the biblical tradition have changed during the last decades of the twentieth and first decades of the twenty-first century. It isn't uncommon to find that a given researcher's earlier published conclusions have been modified or abandoned in later writings. In creating this volume, we have attempted to be mindful of the fluidity currently expressing itself in Samaritan studies.

The Samaritans canonized only the Pentateuch, the first five books of what most Jews and Christians accept from Hebrew tradition. These books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), known to both Samaritans and Jews by the first Hebrew word of each book, are second only to God in the basic affirmations of the Samaritan creed. The words of these books defined the location of the Samaritan holy place and the services performed there, and established the qualifications for the priesthood and its hierarchy. The task of their interpretation is the major source of priestly status. The SP is read and revered in all services of Samaritan worship. Its words are carved in stone to decorate and protect synagogues, and are carefully copied by hand on parchment or quality paper to be passed down from one generation to the next.

The SP has been in meaningful, sometimes accidental and sometimes deliberate, dialogue with the MT and LXX texts of the Pentateuch. The reintroduction of the SP to Europe in the seventeenth century immediately

placed the SP in the midst of a religious controversy that would last nearly two hundred years. This controversy cast the SP into a support role, propping up either the LXX or the MT reading. As that controversy waned, so did interest in the SP—at least for a time. All that is now changing and the SP is once again moving toward center stage in text-critical discussions of both the Hebrew Bible and the Christian New Testament. The last several decades have witnessed the publication of new materials from Qumran, extensive archaeological excavations at Gerizim, and historical enquiry into the Hasmonean and Herodian periods, all vectoring together to shine a spotlight on the formative influence exerted by the SP textual tradition and the Samaritan religious community on the text history of the Hebrew Bible and the early history of the Jesus movement. The present volume is focused on the origin, history, and significance of the revered text of the SP within both the Samaritan community and the communities it has touched: early Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and the community of scholars who have been attracted to it.

PLAN OF THIS BOOK

This book follows a primarily chronological outline, tracing the history of the SP from its origins to its most recent translations. Chapter 1 surveys three stories of the origins of Samaritanism, establishing what can be known of the early Samaritan community and the common pentateuchal traditions of the Second Temple period. The SP textual tradition is placed within the context of origins reaching back to the late Second Temple period.

In chapter 2, we turn our attention to the Qumran scrolls. The materials from Qumran give us a window into the literary milieu of late Second Temple period Palestine. The Qumran scrolls point us toward the recognition of a pluriform Hebrew Bible, revealing scribal practices that blur the modern boundary between composition and exegesis. This pluriform scriptural tradition provides the seedbed from which the SP would grow.

Chapter 3 considers the specific Qumran materials that are most closely linked to the SP. We look at these materials for what they may tell us about the prehistory of the SP. Labeled “pre-Samaritan,” this collection of Qumran materials shares certain harmonizations and interpolations that will come to characterize the SP.

Chapter 4 examines the movement from the pre-Samaritan text to the SP by the addition of a sectarian editorial layer. The pre-Samaritan text

participated in a common literary milieu with the proto-MT, LXX, and various unaligned texts also evident at Qumran. The sectarian adoption of the pre-Samaritan text parallels similar textual preferences by other religious groups between the first century B.C.E. and the first century C.E.

Chapter 5 examines the textual characteristics of the SP. There are several significant differences between the SP, MT, and LXX and many minor differences. This begs the question of the extent to which the SP is an independent source and whether, and how, it is related to either the proto-MT or the LXX (or its Hebrew *Vorlage*). Evidence from the DSS has contributed to this conversation and has enabled a more nuanced approach to the comparison of text families, including a sectarian recension of the pre-Samaritan text. Particular attention is given to a number of interpolations characteristic of the SP, especially in the Decalogue of Exod 20.

The presence of the SP and its advocates is felt in emerging sectarianism among Jews, Samaritans, and Christians. It is quite noticeable in the text and narrative of the New Testament, a phenomena that is explored in chapter 6. More enthusiastic scholars have sometimes overstated the case, finding a Samaritan behind every olive tree in the New Testament.¹ Most New Testament research, however, falls on the opposite end of the spectrum so that, despite decades of significant scholarship, the likely influence and presence of Samaritan interests in the New Testament still have very low visibility. As will be seen, Samaritan culture was in the midst of the northern Palestinian milieu that produced the Q source and the Gospels of Mark and John. The religious ideas that flowed between the various sects of Gnosticism, Judaism, and Christianity moved with the Jews who travelled the roads of Samaria and the Samaritans who travelled the roads of Judea. Samaritans were an intentional target of sectarian missions, including those of both Hellenistic and Apostolic Christians. Samaritans make important appearances in the New Testament stories. New Testament writers had Samaritans in their field of vision as they composed their works and may have made use of readings from the SP.

Chapter 7 highlights the most revered copy of the SP currently in existence, the Abisha Scroll. Evidence from this scroll, additional significant artifacts (scroll cases, amulets, and stone inscriptions) bearing pentateuchal inscriptions, and scribal traditions are used to trace the history

1. Most notable is Heinrich Hammer's *Traktat vom Samaritanermessianias: Studien zur Frage der Existenz und Abstammung Jesu* (Bonn: Georgi, 1913). In Hammer's view, Jesus himself was a Samaritan.

of the SP through the first millennium, in many ways a hidden era in SP studies. This chapter describes centers of scribal production as well as the prominent scribal families responsible for the continuation of the SP tradition into the second millennium.

Chapter 8 describes the impact of the SP when it first became available to Western scholars. M. H. Goshen-Gottstein has said that the mid-seventeenth century was the first watershed in the history of textual criticism.² This flurry of interest, reflecting larger Catholic/Protestant theological tensions, was fueled by the arrival of the SP in Europe. Each side hoped that the SP would prove whether the LXX (preferred by Roman Catholics) or the MT (preferred by Protestants) offered the more original text of the Old Testament. As we will see, scholars in subsequent centuries have developed less heated and more sophisticated ways of considering the evidence.

Chapter 9 follows the SP as it survived through the centuries by adopting and adapting the common language of its various places of residence, both at Mount Gerizim and in the Samaritan diaspora. When Aramaic replaced Hebrew as the spoken language among Jews and Samaritans, each developed an Aramaic paraphrase of their Scriptures. The Samaritan Aramaic Targum was adapted differently in different chronological periods, influenced by factors like the sophistication of individual scribes, the influence of Arabic, and theological currents. A Greek translation, the *Samareitikon*, referenced by several of the church fathers (particularly Origen), may have been a translation of the Targum. It raises the issue of the existence of a Greek translation of the SP. In the Middle Ages an Arabic SP evolved. More recently, interest in the SP has grown, and it has been published in various editions, at times parallel to the MT and most recently in parallel English translations.

An appendix with a survey of modern tools and translations that may assist the interested SP student, followed by a bibliography, concludes the book.

2. Moshe H. Goshen-Gottstein, "The Textual Criticism of the Old Testament: Rise, Decline, and Rebirth," *JBL* 102 (1983): 372.