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THE DATE OF THE SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH

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(P. 193) PROF. EDUARD KONIG declares in Hastings's Dictionary that no modern scholar dates the Samaritan Pentateuch earlier than the time of Ezra. He fixes the date about 444 B.C. He brings forward no proof, he adduces no argument, he does not discuss the question at all, because he considers it settled in the minds of all scholars. He simply begs the question when he sets up the year 444. On the other hand, Prof. Emil Kautzsch, editor of Gesenius's "Hebrew Grammar," editor of a new translation of the Old Testament, author of volumes on the "Poetry," and "A History of the Literature of the Old Testament," declares in Herzog's Encyclopedia, third edition, that "the time of the introduction of the Pentateuch among the Samaritans is entirely unknown to us." He thus humbly acknowledges that he does not know, and as boldly affirms that neither Professor Konig nor any other scholar knows anything about the date of the Samaritan Pentateuch. Professor Kautzsch does not discuss the question at all. He simply dismisses it in despair.

Prof. A. E. Cowley in "Encyclopaedia Biblica" agrees with Professor Kautzsch, for he says, "At what time the Samaritans received the Pentateuch can not now be determined." Wellhausen ignores the problem in his "Prolegomena," and Driver, in his "Introduction," passes the question by in silence, and yet this Pentateuch must have appeared at some time. It is a large volume, the only large volume of antiquity that has not been assigned an approximate date. Classical, Sanscrit, Chinese scholars do not give up such tasks as hopeless as Professors Kautzsch and Cowley have done.

I could wish that some one would redeem the good name of Hebrew scholarship in this particular case and, by a critical study of the Samaritan Pentateuch, determine—what is now an open and neglected question among scholars—the date of this venerable document.

In the days of our Lord the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, but He had and He found them more favorable to Him than His own nation was. When He fled from Jerusalem He was welcomed in Sychar. When He healed the lepers He received thanks from only one, and that one was a Samaritan. In one of His parables He holds up a Jewish priest and a Levite to contempt in order to exalt a good Samaritan. Among His parting words to the twelve were these. "He told the woman of Samaria plainly: "Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews." Nevertheless, the woman claimed Jacob as her father, and she hoped for the coming of the Messiah, who would tell her all things. She knew enough to recognize in Jesus the Messiah she had hoped for, and her townspeople quickly hailed Him as "the Savior of the world." The sudden conversion of the village of Sychar and later of the city of Samaria to faith in Christ is to be explained by the fact that, altho they were shut out of the temple at Jerusalem, they had a temple of their own and, what was far better, a copy of the five books of Moses. Origen, in his "Hexapla," gives various readings from the Samaritan Pentateuch, and Jerome and the rabbis refer to it. Walton published it in his Polyglot. The stragglng remnant of this old race, still living at the foot of Mt. (p. 194) Gerizim, exhibit to travelers a copy of the old original scroll. It is the single purpose of this article to inquire how long the Pentateuch has been in possession of the Samaritans, The earliest traces of the existence of the knowledge of the Pentateuch in the Northern Kingdom are found in the reference to the feast that Jeroboam ordained "in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah." Jeroboam thus perpetuated the observance of the harvest-festival which the ten tribes had attended before the schism. The ancient religious feast survived the separation. The celebration of this feast presupposes knowledge of the laws of Moses which prescribed in detail how it should be observed.

Samaritan. In one of His parables He holds up a Jewish priest and a Levite to contempt in order to exalt a good Samaritan. Among His parting words to the twelve were these: "Ye shall be witnesses for me in Samaria." He told the woman of Samaria plainly: "Ye



There are further traces of knowledge of the law in the allusions which Hosea and Amos make to all manner of sacrifices, allusions that would be intelligible only to people

already well versed in the ritual of Moses. The forms of this ritual were so common that the prophets condemned the people for observing them in such a formal manner.

The law must have been known among the remnant of the ten tribes in the days of King Hezekiah, for his messengers invited and persuaded many Northern Israelites to come to Jerusalem to observe the Passover. These people would not have gone, they would not have been invited to go, to Jerusalem if they had not known already about the Passover from the law which they possess.

King Josiah likewise treated the Northern Israelites as coreligionists, as those upon whom the law had a claim, who knew their duty, and needed only to be reminded of it to do it. It is inconceivable that either king would have sent a formal request to come to the Passover to people who knew nothing about that legal feast. The priest that was sent back from captivity in the East to teach the Eastern colonists in Samaria was himself a native of Samaria, and he taught "the manner of the God of the land" as he had learned it himself. He taught the fear or worship of Jehovah by reviving the feast-days and sacrifices that were observed in the days of Amos and Hosea.

When Zerubbabel came back to settle in Jerusalem, the descendants of the foreign colonists approached him, claiming that they worshiped the same God that he did and had offered sacrifices to him for one hundred and fifty years, since the days of Esarhaddon. They came to help build the temple. The only conceivable explanation of this friendly offer is the one which they aver, *viz.*, that they were worshipers of Jehovah. Their conviction of their right to share in the building of the temple was deep, and the repulse which they met aroused their fury, the fury which only the disinherited feel. This deep conviction and high fury can be explained only by the fact that they, possessors of the law, were not allowed to join in the observance of the law at Jerusalem. They earnestly desired to build the temple in the year 536 because they had been familiar for so long a time with the ritual of the temple. This is the only motive that can explain their generous offer. It was only when they were satisfied that they could not worship in the temple at Jerusalem that they built a temple of their own on Gerizim. They had the law, and they built a temple to observe the law. Their zeal for the law was so great that no rebuff or repulse or hatred or contempt could break their attachment for it. Such devotion grows not in a night like a mushroom, • but in a century, like an oak. A community does not receive a new ritual and conclude to build a temple in a day. It was not sudden hatred or bitter spite that led to the erection of the temple at Shechem. It was unquenchable love, love for the law of Moses, the precious heirloom of their race.

After Ezra in 444 B.C. had excluded the Samaritans from the temple and the city, what reason could he have for giving them, as the critics suppose that he did, a copy of the Pentateuch? Neither Ezra nor Nehemiah refers to such a gift. Why should they tantalize the rejected Samaritans by offering them the law, and at the same time forbidding them to observe the law? It may be supposed that the law was not given, but taken, taken by Manasseh, the priest, whom Nehemiah chased, with his Samaritan wife, from his presence. But why, Eduard Reuss asks, "why should Manasseh want to take along a law whose precepts he had broken, a law that had forced him out of his office at Jerusalem?"

The light-footed critic," Reuss adds, "likes too well to jump over such objections." There is no reason why the Jews should give or the Samaritans should take the Pentateuch in a time of actual war. The Jews were a feeble and despised folk, just struggling to get a foothold in Palestine (p. 195) again. The law had not saved them from captivity and exile. Why should the Samaritans wish to adopt the law-book of a handful of Jews? We can imagine a people adopting the religion of a powerful nation, but what was there in the weak and pitiable condition of the Jews in the year 444 B.C. to induce the Samaritans to borrow their statutes?

The Samaritans were proud and powerful and they had nothing to fear from their Jewish neighbors. Why should they be willing to humble themselves still further, and, after they had been refused a part in the temple, implore a part in the law? It is a rare thing for a community to adopt a new religion; rarer still, indeed unparalleled, for a community to adopt the religion of enemies, of enemies that they despised. No explanation is given by the critics of the transition of what they consider the idolatrous Samaritan community into a sect of the Jews. The Samaritan Pentateuch is so nearly like the Jewish Pentateuch that neither can be said to be a transliteration of the other, and both must be copies of an original manuscript that was accessible in the North as well as in the South before the civil war and schism under Jeroboam. This original manuscript is represented not by the Jewish, but by the Samaritan codex; and if there was any copying or transliteration, it must be charged to the Jewish scribes. There is no transliteration on the part of the Samaritan scroll, for it stands in the old character, the oldest alphabet on earth. It is closely allied to the Phœnician, the alphabet adapted by the Greeks, and therefore in use at least 1,400 years before Christ. Its crooked letters are almost identical with those scratched on the walls of the pool of Siloam in 736 B.C.) with those inscribed on the Moabite stone in 895 B.C., and with those cut by Shema, a servant of Jeroboam, on a jasper seal with a lion on it, possibly of still earlier date, found in 1904 at Megiddo. This script is met with also in bits of Phœnician tablets that have come down to us. By the year 700 B.C. this alphabet was in common use in western Asia. The Samaritan Pentateuch is the only document extant written in this earliest alphabet of mankind. The Moabites left nothing but the stele of King Mesa, and the Phœnicians, if they ever had any literature, have preserved nothing but a few mortuary inscriptions.

The Samaritan script is old Hebrew. The Rabbis admit this fact, calling their own alphabet "Assyrian" and giving up the name "Hebrew," the name of their own race, to the alphabet used by their enemies. The Samaritans have preserved the law in this original form, even tho they have made a translation of it into Aramaic, and adopted in turn the Greek and the Arabic as the medium of conversation. On the other hand, the Jews abandoned the Hebrew crooked letter for the Aramaic square letter. This style of writing they acquired during their long exile in the East where the Aramaic was in vogue both as spoken and as a written language. The prophecy of Ezekiel is tinged with Aramaic coloring, and Daniel and Ezra contain large portions written in that tongue. Ezra lived in the days of transition when the old crooked letter was gradually abandoned for the square letter of commerce and law. This is Bernhard Stade's opinion. To be sure, the Jews occasionally, in days of revolt, in later centuries, revived the old crooked letter and stamped it on the coins of the Maccabees and of Bar Cochba, but for ordinary purposes

the old Hebrew form had become obsolete, and the Mishna goes so far as to call the square letter "holy" and the crooked letter "profane." The Babylonian Talmud declares that "the law was given to Israel in Hebrew, but afterward, in the days of Ezra, it was given again, in Assyrian script, leaving to the ignorant the Hebrew form." H. L. Strack accepts the verdict of both the Talmuds and asserts that Ezra introduced the use of the Aramaic alphabet in transcribing the law. An incidental proof that the Aramaic alphabet was in use in the time of the Savior is found in His reference to the "jot." The "jot" is the smallest letter, not in the crooked, but in the square alphabet.

In the year 444 B.C. when, according to Stade, Strack, Neubauer, and the Rabbis, the square letter was in use at Jerusalem, the Samaritan Pentateuch could not have been produced. A few letters could have been put together for the face of a coin, but it would have been impossible for scribes to transliterate a great volume like the Pentateuch into the obsolete crooked letter of the Samaritans. The Pentateuch must have been copied word for word from an older manuscript in the same archaic form, and that from another, and so back to the first (p. 196) copy, but that presupposes the existence of the Pentateuch for centuries before the year 444 B.C.

There must therefore have been a copy of the law in existence before the days of Ezra, to account for the appearance of the Samaritan Pentateuch in the days of Ezra. Even if scribes could have been found in 444 B.C. expert enough to transcribe the Pentateuch in different characters, why should men from the East, where the square letter was in use, ask for the law written in a form unintelligible to them? If they obtained a copy of the law in 444 B.C., as the critics all say, why did they not take it in the square letter which was familiar to them? But if they owned a copy before the square letter was introduced into Palestine, it is easy to see why their copy is preserved in the original crooked script of Palestine. In an earlier century they would have had no choice, because at that time the crooked letter alone was in use in the land. But if they had made their choice in 444 B.C. they would never have chosen the old crooked letter which by that time had been displaced, but the square letter which was current in those days and had always been familiar to them.

This concludes my argument which may be resumed briefly as follows: There was always a strong opposition to idolatry in the Northern Kingdom, represented especially by the prophets of Jehovah, by the one who rebuked Jeroboam for setting up the golden calf, by Hosea, by Amos, by Elijah, by Elisha, and by Uziel. Even after the fall of Samaria, Hezekiah and Josiah encouraged this faithful remnant to join in the feast at Jerusalem, and Jeremiah found more true religion in Samaria than in Judea. The law must have been known in the North from the days of Jeroboam because he perpetuated, with slight modifications, the feast-days ordained in the law. The words of Hosea and Amos would be intelligible only to a people familiar with offerings and sacrifices of the law to which these prophets so often refer. The kings of Judah would not have invited the Israelites to the Passover if that legal feast had not been well known in the North.

The priest sent back from exile to teach the new settlers from the East must have taught them what he had learned himself of the ordinances of the law. The eagerness of the

Samaritans to help the Jews in the rebuilding of the temple is explained by their love for the building which had been destroyed and for the law which had been celebrated in it. Their fury, their undying fury, when their offer was rejected, was the fury of the disinherited. The erection of a temple for the observance of the law on Mt. Gerizim is the expression of an old love for the Torah. Ezra and Nehemiah say nothing of giving the Samaritans a copy of the law. The Samaritans would not have humbled themselves to ask for a copy after they had been rejected, rejected by enemies, enemies whom they despised. Of the Pentateuch, the Jewish and the Samaritan, the latter represents the original copy from which both were made because the Samaritan script is the more ancient. The Jewish script was derived from the Samaritan through the Aramaic. The transliteration of the Jewish Torah into the old crooked Hebrew letter would have been impossible in 444 B.C. Besides, it would have been unnecessary, for at that time the square letter was in common use and was especially familiar to the Samaritans who were emigrants from the country where the square letter originated. On the other hand, the Samaritan Pentateuch must have originated before the square letter was known in Palestine, in the time when the crooked Phenician script held sole sway in that part of western Asia.

If I have replied to no objections and answered no arguments made by the advocates of the year 444 B.C. as the date of the origin of the Samaritan Pentateuch, my reason, as already stated, is that this date has been agreed upon by men who have made a bold front and, without reason or argument, have begged the whole question. This question of the date of the origin of the Samaritan Pentateuch stands like a rock in the way of the higher critics. If they fall on it they will be broken. Therefore I do not wonder that they have tried to avoid it, for if there was a copy of the law before the year 444 B.C. their whole scheme would dissolve back into thin air.

(p. 197) A NEW SAMARITAN BOOK OF JOSHUA

AN interesting side-light has just been thrown on the preceding article through the discovery by Rabbi Gaster, of London, of a new Samaritan Book of Joshua. He recently described this book before the members of the Royal Asiatic Society. We quote from the address as reported by *The London Chronicle*:

"While on a visit to Nablus last year he received from the high priest a manuscript which proved to be a chronicle or brief history of the Samaritans from the entry of the Children of Israel into Palestine under Joshua up to the present time. What was equally remarkable was that from the verger he received another manuscript which was almost identical with it!

"Careful examination had convinced him that it was an authentic copy of the old Hebrew original. For centuries there was a vague idea that such a book in the Hebrew language had existed among the Samaritans, but nothing was known of it, and to his surprize and delight he had concluded that this was the lost book.

"It must have been considered by the Samaritans as a book of authority, Dr. Gaster observed, for the calendar started from the indications in it. It could not have been translated from the Greek because it agreed entirely with the Hebrew, while the knowledge of the Hebrew language among modern Samaritans was very limited.

"The new book starts with a definite date of the era of creation, the year 2794 from the creation being given as the date of the death of Moses, and from the year starts the new calculation of the jubilee. That, Dr. Gaster explained, was omitted from the Bible. It then describes how Joshua was commanded to proceed to the entry of the Promised Land. Joshua ordered the counting of the people, which also did not appear in the Bible. Then it states that the spies went to Jericho, and on their return gave a report to Joshua and the high priest Eleazar. They crossed the Jordan, preceded by the ark, and put up the stones in Gilgal, but there was no mention of the 'reproach of Egypt.'

"A beautiful story is given of the sin of Achan. This differs from the Bible account. In the latter, Achan is stated to have stolen a mantle. According to the new book he stole a golden idol from a temple, and his guilt was discovered by the stones on the breastplate of the high priest getting dim and losing their luster when the name of the guilty man was pronounced.

"The story of the stratagem of the capture of Ai is related, but no mention is made of Joshua holding up the lance. The Bible says that Joshua sent 30,000 men against Ai, whereas the new book says that he sent only 3,000. In an account of the ruse of the Gibeonites, however, the language, which is very difficult, agrees in every minute detail with the canonical text.

"In the fight with the combined forces of the kings there was nothing told of Joshua's invocation to the sun to stand still on Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon. The history proceeded on the same lines as the Bible until the division of the land among the nine tribes and a half.

"One of the most interesting stories in the book describes how Joshua was saved before Jericho. The version goes that the two and a half tribes returned beyond the Jordan with King Nobah appointed over them. Joshua was attacked by King Shobach, and his army trapt or encircled t>y seven walls of iron, made by the wizards and enchanter in the service of Shobach. Joshua prayed to God. A dove came to him; he tied a letter to its wings, and it bore a message to King Nobah, who, with his tribes, came to Joshua's rescue. The priest Phineas blew a trumpet once, the walls fell down, and Joshua defeated Shobach.

"When Joshua assembled his people in Shechem and took leave of them, he did not refer in his address, according to the new book, to the fact that 'the forefathers served other gods.'

"Many of the points wherein the Samaritan text differed from the Bible were found also in Josephus, and also in other Jewish Rabbinical writings. This showed that Josephus did not invent any of the legends, as he was supposed to have done.

"The original of the newly recovered Hebrew version, Dr. Gaster said, must have been composed at least 200 years before Christ, and the book, which threw some light on the history of those times, together with other Samaritan writings, might elucidate some of the problems which centered around the Bible."

Upon this "find" which was submitted to Dr. Everts he comments as follows:

"I quote Emil Kautzsch on the Samaritan Book of Joshua (Riehin's Dictionary, page 1371):

"The book of Joshua was probably composed in the thirteenth century A.D. It is extant only in Arabic and may have been composed in Arabic. It treats in thirty-eight chapters with the history of Moses and Joshua, generally depending on the Hebrew book of Joshua. But there are many apocryphal additions.'

I fear *The London Chronicle* "has been taken in by Rabbi Gaster."

Note from the Editor of theSamaritanUpdate.com

I would like to say that at the time of the writing of this article, there was little evidence in English that supported the Samaritan-Israelites. Thanks to bold scholars like Rabbi Moses Gaster and those before and after have contributed so much information to the field, we find evidence in all corners to support the Samaritan-Israelites.

*This article is noted as 1500 in A **Bibliography of the Samaritans, Third Edition: Revised, Expanded, and Annotated**, by Alan David Crown and Reinhard Pummer. ATLA Bibliography, No. 51., The Scarecrow Press, Inc. 2005*