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**SHIFMAN:"THE LANGUAGE OF THE SHELVED DEAD SEA  
SCROLLS, WHICH WERE REVEALED IN KUMRAN, IS LATER  
THEN THE LANGUAGE OF THE KNOWN VERSIONS OF THE  
TORAH"**

**["A.B-The Samaritans News" Volumes 703-704,705-706]**

**INTERVIEW OF A.B. WITH PROF. LAURENCE SHIFMAN,  
A RESEARCHER OF THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS  
THE INTERVIEWEER**

Prof. Laurence Shifman is known in the world of research as a member at the International team of researchers of the shelved scrolls. He studied and published books about the secrets of the scrolls. He is one of the two editors of "The Encyclopedia of Israel Religion" - which will be published, with God's help, until the year 2000 - and one of the three editors of the new journal: "Dead Sea Discoveries" [= the discoveries from Judea Desert]. The criticism concerning the scrolls, only helped to bring them into the public's knowledge, and urged-on their release. Prof. Shifman was also a member of the commission for celebrating 50 years to research of "the Dead Sea Scrolls", which took-place last summer at Jerusalem. We participate in the celebration by releasing the interview with him - which took-place at his office in "the New York University" in New York.

**WERE THERE SAMARITANS IN KUMRAN?**

A.B.: We are honored to interview Prof. Laurence Shifman, from the Judaism-sciences unit in the New-York University, also known as a quintessential researcher of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Lately, a number of researchers hold the opinion that there were Samaritans in Kumran, or at-least a party, which its members conducted as the Samaritans' customs. That explains the existence of scrolls, which are formulated as the Samaritan's version of the Torah, or - as the researchers names them: "a Samaritan-imitation form". May we open with this amusing episode of Samaritans living abstinence life in Kumran, and the revealing of the documents in Metsadah, near the days of the Second-Temple destruction, proving presence of Samaritan soldiers among the few last warriors in Metsadah.

Prof. Laurence Shifman: The problem is - that we still don't know whether there were parties in Kumran, or just scrolls, or may-be the scrolls were also brought to Kumran from other places. If indeed the scrolls were written there, those who represent some-way in Judaism, we don't know if this kind of party had lived in Kumran, or just the scrolls were brought to there. Speaking about the Samaritan matter - we are referring to the scrolls of the Torah. Those scrolls are compatible in their style and harmonization [texts matching] - to the version, which the Samaritans have. Also, some versions are a Samaritan-imitation form, which means: the matters - of setting up alter on Mt. Gerizim or "the place that he chose" instead of Jerusalem - are not mentioned there. Most of the researchers think that the version alterations - concerning the chosen place, in the Samaritan version - are tendentious, whereas the similar alterations and the harmonization in the Kumran scrolls are not tendentious, even though, mostly they are very similar to the version that the Samaritans possess.

### **A JEWISH VERSION or A SAMARITAN VERSION"?**

What do you think is the right definition - is there a Jewish version and a Samaritan version, or it's more correct to define: "the version which the Jews possess" and "the version which the Samaritans possess?"

Let me explain it this way: At first, during the Kumran period, there were a few versions of the Torah. Afterwards those versions fell into our hands. Prof. Emanuel Tov [the head of the international commission for researching the Kumran scrolls] holds the opinion that the most important version was "the Traditional Version", and out of him a few versions were formed, such as "the Translation of the Seventy Sages - Imitation Form", or the one we call "a Samaritan-Imitation Form", or the mixed version, which is not similar to the others. All these versions had pass from one generation to another, until they fell into our hands, but unlike them, the version that the Samaritans possess nowadays, had pass a tendentious Samaritan editing, and that's why it has to be called "a Samaritan Version".

**Since probably all of the Kumran scrolls are originally Jewish - Why do we have to look for the Samaritan "dress", when it is certain that those who used the Kumran scrolls were Jews? If you claim that there is an "adaptation" of the Samaritan version, can we comprehend when this "adaptation" took place, by the development and changes of the versions?**

There are a few possibilities. Let's say that near the year 500 B.C. there was such a version that got into the hands of the Samaritans, and they formulated this version according to their religion

needs. This version, I assume [because I don't have any evidence for this] also got into Kumran without the Samaritan editing. The Samaritans have ancient roots, even before the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. I don't approve the opinion that somehow the Samaritans had come into existence during the second Century B.C. I am willing to accept the opinion that it was Samaritans hands that made this editing after Ezra and Nehemiah period, during the "separation" when they chose Mt. Gerizim, but definitely not after the Kumran period. I suppose that the "Samaritan-imitation form" from Kumran got there while "the Samaritan version" was already formulated, having said that we have no evidence for this.

### **Can we approach, through Kumran findings, to the ancestor version of the Torah - "the Upper Text"?**

No, no, no! There is no such a thing! We cannot approach, through Kumran scrolls, to the text of the Torah, which was written by Yirmi'ia'hu the prophet, for example. There is no such a thing. All Kumran versions have passed through a very long history. We don't have enough knowledge about what was before the Hellenistic period. One thing I would like to remark: "The Massora version" [= the Hebrew text] linguistically - is a former version to the Kumran ones.

### **WHEN DID THE JUDAISM AND THE SAMARITANISM COME INTO EXISTENCE?**

Let's go together step by step. Now we are not talking about versions. We are generally speaking about the matter: When did the Judaism come into existence? When did the Samaritanism come into existence? I'm not sure, it is possible to know. I suppose that the Judaism and its culture were created at Judea kingdom during the biblical time, whereas the Samaritanism and its culture was created on the North and at the Samaria kingdom. Already in the Bible we can see that the religion and the culture on the North were somehow different from the culture and the religion in Judea. These two cultures had been developed so much, that I can't say that the development and the original are the same, both in the Judaism and the Samaritanism. The development after the separation was very big, but the rift caused an enormous development.

**Can you indicate the exact time of the rift? We are referring to the rift into two different beings.**

The moment - when the ones who rebuilt Jerusalem during the Fifth's century B.C. had put the Samaritans off [those who felt like belonging to the Israeli people] - the quarrel had begin and it led to a total separation.

## **A JEWISH-SAMARITAN POLEMIC**

### **Do you think that the rift became more substantial against the political background?**

Usually it goes like this. I think that the religious background had encouraged the rift very much. After this separation, the Samaritans had developed to a certain direction, other then the direction of the Judaism, which chose "Har Haba'it" in Jerusalem. It is obvious that this event influenced the political situation. We can't separate the religious situation from the political situation. I could say that the political history which created this situation - in which the Samaritans had live in one area and the Jews had live in another area - influenced a great deal on the separation between them. That's how the reference to the Samaritans' land - as "the Cuttim District" - was made up in the Judaism, which means that the Judaism refers to this not only as "abroad" but also that its residents are not Jewish. Nowadays, the opposite process occurs in which there are assimilated groups inside the standard Judaism.

But during those days, although in the beginning there was a co-operation between Jews and Samaritans - as the Christianity grew stronger, whose believers claimed to be "the real Jews", so the Judaism will to build like a fortified wall against the Christianity grew stronger. Into this trend, somehow, the Samaritans were thrown too. Because of this, the Jews strived to be distinguished from the Christians, and in the meantime became distinguished from the Samaritans too.

### **Do you accept the opinion that in the Judaism, there are rules that were set, because of the Samaritans, such as - "Sfirat Ha'omer", "Enjoyment of the Sabbath" etc?**

It should be with the Bytosis [one of the Jewish parties during the days of the Second Temple]. Let me put it this way - the Samaritans and some of the Kumran and the Tsedokim groups had theories that were opposite to the Jewish Sages theories. They, the Jewish Sages, set rules in contrast to this current. We should not forget that during "The Middle Age" the Samaritans were influenced by the Kar'im. Unlike the argument with the Christianity, which claimed that it is the correct Judaism, and so the Jews had to set rules in order to isolate themselves completely from

it. There weren't any rules that were set as an exclamation of contrariness from the Samaritans, but as to be in contrast with a certain kind of religious trend, which the Samaritans were apart of him.

**Did the Samaritans constituted an existential threat to the Judaism of "the Second Temple" days?**

I wouldn't call it "a threat", but "a competition". The Samaritans competed the Jews and the Jews did the same, but neither of them constituted a threat on the other.

**How can you explain the wide reference in the literature of the Mishnah and of the Talmud to the Samaritans?**

This topic is precisely the problem of our days. On one hand, there is a group, which keeps most of the commandments, according to the Jewish Sages theories. For instance, we couldn't say that the Samaritans don't keep the Sabbath along with other precepts too. This is one thing. The other thing is regarding to the political topic. Like today, part of the Samaritans' interests during the Second Temple period had suit the Judaism interests, and part of them had not. On the other hand, there were some Samaritans who began to deteriorate [as far as I know - events of this kind don't happen nowadays] and some Samaritans in those days had deteriorate so much, that the Jews was afraid of this, and those Samaritans' interests had suit the Gentiles' interests and not the Israeli people's one. It was an ambivalent process, which lasted for along time, until it was decided by the Judaism not to make a difference between them, and to become distinguished from all the Samaritans.

**SETTLING THE CONTRADICTION**

A.B.: Precisely on this topic we disagree with you. How can you explain this contradiction that claims - as an exclamation of contrariness during this period of time the Samaritans had suffer a grate loss of their number of people, because of their persistence and devotion to their tradition,

like during the rebellions against the Byzantines? How can you claim that at least part of them had deteriorated to the direction of the Gentiles?

Prof. Shifman: Watch the Jews of our days. Join me for a reconnaissance in New York. You can observe both - Jews maintain the Judaism ...

This example doesn't fit. The Jews in the U.S.A are not in the middle of a political struggle, and they don't suffer from American decrees... [Laughing:] Well, let's go back to what it used to be. I say [Prof. Shifman selects his words:] part of the people ... It is very complicated; all of these events are so complicated. Not every Samaritan was devoted to his faith the same as the others. We don't have the means to estimate the interior history of the Samaritans during the Second Temple period, as well as the relationship between one another. It may happen that one Rabbi had met a Samaritan whom he liked because he keeps the precepts from the Torah in all sincerity, and another Rabbi may have met a Samaritan who didn't fulfill the commandments according to the Rabbi's understanding. The same happens in the U.S.A's Judaism, when one orthodox Rabbi can come across one Reformist who loves the State of Israel and keeps the precepts from the Torah, and another Orthodox Rabbi can come across another Reformist who believes that the State of Israel should be extracted, and "who needs the Torah?" etc. - incidents which had a great influence on the all-inclusive determining against them.

The deterioration during the ancient time occurred both among the Samaritans and the Jews?

I think so. We examine this phenomenon in a simplistic way. There were some Jews and there were some Samaritans who became Hellenized. For the Romans and against the Romans. All was very complicated. Always I claim - we should take the model of life today and realize that things are complicated. We should conclude out of this to - what was in the past. Take, for an example, Crown [the Samaritanologist Prof. Alan D.], suddenly he writes that he found out that there was an economical life in Qumran, so checkings were started in order to see if all the domestic animals were from the same type, etc. I tell them: Don't you see? On that time there were also domestic vendors, who sold the animals from one region to another region. We must understand - when speaking about our matter - that there were internal arguments. To the Jewish Sages, the loyalty had matter. If there were three Samaritans, among 50 Samaritans, who didn't make a Kosher wine, so there is no loyalty. They decided according to the three who didn't obey the precepts. For instance, nowadays, here in the U.S.A., there are 100 companies, which produce one kind of consumer good, 95% makes it Kosher, and 5% don't. So. One can

suspect if indeed it is a kosher product. So it brings us again to the obvious conclusion that all were very complicated. I believe that also the political background had a great influence on the Jewish Sages' stand - the fact that there was a time when the Samaritans presented themselves as un-Jews.

## **IDENTITY AND IDENTIFICATION MATTERS**

But, also, they didn't claim to be Jews either. They had regard themselves as Israelis.

But it wasn't accepted by the Jewish Sages, because it was a declaration towards the Gentiles. I'm not sure that this distinction between Judaism and Israelism was mentioned in the Bible. This distinction is supported by the research of the Bible, in which the Gentile researchers speaks about "Ancient Israel". This solves the problem and gives you some frame ...

What do you mean - "... solves us..." ? Should we wait for the Gentiles to give us "He'chsher"?

No, no, no! I think it is so.

Wait a moment! Do you disclaim the existence of "the Ancient Israel"?

No, no, no!

Do you agree that the customs of nowadays' normative Judaism are not the same as the customs of Ancient Israel?

Our days normative Judaism is not the normative Judaism from the days of the Second Temple, which also was not the Ancient Israel. But you asked me - when were the Judaism and the Samaritanism formed? And I answered - already during the First Temple period. The Gentile researchers made a partition between Ancient Israel and the Judaism from the days of the Second Temple, and referred to them as two different entities. Your act, of making this distinction too, helps the un-correct examination of the Bible.

Certainly you know that we don't make this discrimination, because the Identity as Samaritans doesn't exist in the Samaritans' version of the Torah. Through generations, we always regard ourselves as Israelis who maintain the Torah's truth.

True. But the Gentile researchers made this discrimination in order to prove that the Christianity, indeed, is the continuation of the Ancient Israel, and not the Judaism.

## **COMPARING CUSTOMES BETWEEN PARTIES**

Let's go back to the scrolls - there is a trend in the scrolls' research, to look at the self made compositions of the parties, in order to compare between the customs, which are mentioned there, and the customs of the Samaritans and of other groups. Can we conclude out of it that there were Samaritans' presence among those groups, or perhaps you accept the opinion, which claims - that the Samaritanism is the ancient Judaism, which stagnated?

It's two totally different things. I have checked the issue of the laws of Sabbath [Hilchot Sabbath] in the Kumran party, and I found allot of things which are similar to the Samaritans. Dr. Boid wrote about it in his book about the Samaritan "Halacha". Prof. Zoosman wrote about it, and these are my claims too: there were two currents in the Ancient Jewish's "Halach", you can name it however you like ...

What do you mean - "... however we like"? It is a matter of choosing the correct definition!

You must understand - I don't state: "I'm Jewish" in order to deprive someone.

## **QUANDARY OF THE INTERVIEWEE - AS A RESEARCHER AND AS A JEWISH**

You have a personal problem - not only that you are Jewish, but you are also a researcher. You don't accept things without any doubts. How can you live with this situation in which you can't determine plain determinings, that your source is so vague? It is a very good question. I know our past is vague. Whoever thinks he can solve all the historical problems - is simply wrong. We all know that Moses had received the torah, but on the other hand there are the historical research and the Bible critical examination. Go rack your brains while trying to solve this problem. There is no solution. What?

- Do I wish to eradicate the foundation of the Judaism? No, I don't wish to. On the other hand



you wish to claim there isn't any history because everything is vague. So what can we do? There is no choice; we live with this vagueness, with the problematic nature of the past. It is not just the problem with the ancient past; it is also the problem with the not-distant past that has vagueness.

And out of it you resign yourself to the existence of different trends in the Judaism. You don't reject it.

As well. It is not a matter of rejecting or not rejecting. My opinion is that we should consider what had happen. The one who thinks that there aren't any trends nowadays - is a fool. Those who claim that the different currents are unlawful - don't see that among them they have different trend too. For instance, if I would say the Reforms are unlawful, then how should I refer to "Neturei-Karta"? Aren't they unlawful? After all, they entirely disclaim the permissibility of the existence of the State of Israel.

### **UNITED INCLINATION AND SHARED CUSTOMES**

Let's go back to the original question.

Right, all about the similar manners. When I say there were Samaritans, you have to know that there were other parties, which we know about, and parties, which we don't know about. But all of those groups had a united inclination or shared customs. All those parties had an historical link too. I don't look for Samaritans in Kumran, but I search for evidences to manners, which later appears the Samaritans' way of life. It is possible that the Samaritans behaved this way during the days of the Kumran, but I don't hold evidence about it.

### **WERE THERE "JEWS" IN KUMRAN?**

In that case, the obvious question is - Were there Jews in Kumran, in the sense of "Jews"?

I heard a story about the Rabbi Shlomo Goren [of blessed memory] which the Rabbanit Goren told me it wasn't a truth, but nevertheless, I'm going to tell the story but we will call it - a legend. This story I have heard from Windel Jones: The story says that the Rabbi Goren had claim that the Asians were not Jews. He, Windel Jones, showed my book - about "Halacha" in Kumran - to the Rabbi Goren. After he read the book he said: Now I accept that they were Jews. I asked the Rabbanit Goren, and she said: Never did my husband think that they were not Jews.

But anyway?

I can see what you mean, this is the question - If you are referring to the Jews from the days of the Second Temple and not to the Jews from the Mishnah and the Talmud period - so indeed they were Jews. If you are referring to the Mishnah and the Talmud's Jews - so they were not Jews in

this sense. I agree with you. We all agree that there was a rift, and this rift brought the substantial rift - in the way of understanding the commandments - between the Jews and the Samaritans. You may say - the Kara'im were developed from this group - the Ancient Israeli one..

But this is a late development in the Judaism ...

Right, but the Kara'im claims that ...

The Kara'im claims. The Jews claims. The Rabbanim claims. But we search for what really happened.

Everyone claims.

Out of it, rises the question: Did the wish of the Judea Desert's Castes to be distinguished, overcome any other wish, and in consequence of it a different reality was created to those castes?

Their problem was that they wanted to keep the purity and the impurity laws, in a way, which no one accepted. That's how they were distinct from everybody, from all the Jews and the Samaritans, or however we shall name them, it doesn't matter. But you should remember one thing - they, the people of Judea Desert's castes, had continued to maintain the family bonds.

### **IS THERE ANY EXAGGERATION OF THE IMPORTANCE OF THE KUMRAN DOCUMENTS?**

Last question: Don't we over exaggerate the real importance of what was found, or maybe the importance of the findings is exaggerate because a similar document wasn't found in any other place? Doesn't it encourage the other researchers to search in other places?

First of all, you should remember that this is what was found. You should also remember that it is a very important thing. Anyway, it is not the whole picture but just a small part of it, which helps

to light up a bigger part of the picture. That's how you should consider these findings. The moment someone refers to the Kumran scrolls as - the whole picture, he is making a big mistake. That's why there are those who tries to learn out of the Kumran scrolls about the beginning of the Christianity or the Judaism or the Samaritanism, etc. Those who tries to catch the whole picture - are very wrong. As to the question of searching in other places, encouraged by this research: There is no other place which would get the same momentum as the one in Kumran, because of the lack of the Christian interest. Even if we would find in Samaria the portrait of Baba Rabba, the greatest leader of the Samaritans, drawn by a mosaic on a stone, it wouldn't get the same publicity attraction as the Kumran scrolls are getting, if only just because Christian researchers are searching, in Kumran, the beginning of the Christianity. This wrong search sets in motion the financial side of "the Shelved Scrolls" research, by allocation budgets in order to enable the continuation of the research. Don't forget that the climate conditions at the Judea Desert region helped to the preservation of these findings, an un-possible situation in other regions which are much more humid.

Thank you very much, Prof. Laurence Shifman!