

Introduction

THE BOUNDARIES OF THE PERIOD known as late antiquity are often defined along religious lines: it can be said to begin with Constantine and the Christianization of the Roman Empire and to end with the birth of Islam.¹ And yet, while to some extent religious affiliations were aligned with imperial borderlines and power structures—Christians on one side, Zoroastrians and later Muslims on the other—such broad generalizations obscure the multiplicity of religious communities that textured the landscape of the Mediterranean world and the Levant, from Spain to Persia. Indeed, the chief legacy of late antiquity may very well be the religious dynamism that endured in this region long after the seventh century, into the present day, as religious traditions both established and nascent, indigenous and influenced from afar, emerged from and encountered one another. These communities concretized distinctive practices, beliefs, and worldviews in diverse literary works, monuments, and artifacts, even as they also retained roots in a larger and shared cultural matrix we call, as a shorthand, late antiquity.

Between the third and seventh centuries CE, the eastern Mediterranean world sustained a multitude of diverse, and diversifying, ethnic-religious communities. Most notably, this epoch witnessed the fierce and expressive final flourishing of Greco-Roman polytheism, with all its political and philosophical richness; the resurgence of a dynamic and vital Judaism, expressed in its monumental architecture and literary output; and the emergence of an assertive and diverse imperial Christianity in both East and West. The literary, material, and visual remains of this period testify to the vibrancy and creativity of all these communities as they encountered, resisted, coexisted with, and responded to one another. The most familiar religions of the modern West—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, in all their fraught and entangled complexity—constitute enduring legacies of this formative, and transformative, period.

1. For a thorough discussion of this contentious periodization, see Marcone, “Long Late Antiquity?”

Reading antiquity through the lens of the present, however, can lead to distortions and oversights, particularly in regard to populations, cultures, and ideologies that today seem quite marginal or even exotic but were important, if perhaps localized, realities in the ancient world. One such case would be Zoroastrianism, the religion of the political elites of the Achaemenid Empire and its Parthian and Sassanian successors, and a familiar presence in the literature of both early Syriac-speaking Christians and the Jews of Babylonia. Today, there is a small but clearly identifiable contemporary Zoroastrian diaspora that proudly recalls its millennia of imperial history.² Another long-lived community—far smaller in antiquity than the Persian Zoroastrians, and less powerful, yet hardly marginal—is that of the Samaritans: the faithful “guardians” (*shomerim*, a play on the Hebrew form of their name) of their Torah and traditions, who have a history as long as that of the Jews. The Samaritans of late antiquity, and particularly their religious self-expression as preserved in the poetry of their “classical” age, are the subject of the present volume.

A full overview of Samaritan history, culture, and traditions far exceeds the scope of this work, and so the present introduction serves primarily to sketch the broad outlines of the subject, with an eye toward contextualizing classical Samaritan poetry and providing bibliographic sources for readers who wish to delve deeper into any given topic. As will become clear, one recurring challenge is the paucity of information from late antiquity; the poems in this volume constitute one of the most robust sources of knowledge we have for concepts and traditions that are otherwise articulated, and more fully developed, only in the medieval and even early modern period. The dates of key figures—for instance, the great reformer Baba Rabbah (lit., “the great gate”)—are modern hypotheses, and I have attempted to flag uncertainties and debates among scholars. Just as with Jewish *piyyut* (liturgical poetry), where the chronology is relative, enabling periodization but not dating, the only truly inarguable statements one can make about most of these poems are that they are written in an authentic Aramaic from late antiquity (as discussed below) and that they are revered by the Samaritan community to this day.

A Starting Point

Like the Zoroastrians, the Samaritans have maintained their distinctive identity into the present: a population of around eight hundred individuals is split

2. On Zoroastrianism, especially in the modern world, see the essays collected in Williams, Stewart, and Hintze, *Zoroastrian Flame*, and Stausberg, Vevaina, and Tessmann, *Wiley Blackwell Companion to Zoroastrianism*.

between the city of Holon, outside Tel Aviv in the modern state of Israel, and the vicinity of Mount Gerizim, their holiest site, located in the West Bank near Nablus (Neopolis), known in the Bible as Shechem.³ Historically, the Samaritans have generally lived in close proximity to Shechem, but literary and material sources indicate that small but noteworthy Samaritan diasporas did exist throughout the ancient world.⁴ Between the fourth century BCE and the nineteenth century CE, Samaritan communities are attested in Egypt, Greece, Italy, Asia Minor, the Levant, and the Arabian Peninsula. These exile communities were often conflated with nearby Jewish communities by their Christian and Muslim contemporaries because overt cultural markers shared by the two groups—including iconography, architecture, language, and names—are more conspicuous to outsiders than the theological and ideological differences that separate them.

Today, for the most part, outside of modern Israel, Samaritans are known not on their own terms, as a modern religious and ethnic community with their own religious traditions and historical integrity, but rather through the lenses of others. In the Anglophone world, familiarity with Samaritans comes almost exclusively through the New Testament parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–37) and the institutions that derive their names from that story, such as Good Samaritan hospitals and the Samaritan’s Purse charity organization. Other passages, such as the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:4–26), may also come to mind.⁵ The problematic nature of such perceptions hardly needs articulation;

3. Several essays treating the modern Samaritan community can be found in Dušek, *Samaritans*. On the self-understanding of the history and population of Samaritans in Israel and Palestine over the last century, see Israelite Samaritan Information Institute, “Population.” The ancient capital of Samaria, Shechem, now lies in the Palestinian territories. While it is now common to equate Shechem with Neapolis (modern Nablus), biblical Shechem occupied the site now known as Tell Balāṭa; Neapolis was founded as a Roman city in 72 CE by the emperor Vespasian. See Campbell, “Shechem—Tel Balāṭah.”

4. For a summary of the evidence for Samaritan diaspora settlements, see Zsengellér, “Samaritan Diaspora in Antiquity.” As Zsengellér notes, it can often be very difficult to distinguish Samaritan communities from Jewish communities. See also Crown, “Samaritan Diaspora”; Pummer, *Samaritans*, 180–87; Rutgers, *Hidden Heritage*, 84–85, 276–77. For a time, modern Samaritans rejected the idea of a Samaritan diaspora; see A. B. Institute of Samaritan Studies, *Samaritan Survival*. This pamphlet categorically denies the existence of a Samaritan diaspora, stating that “diasporas were never established outside the Land of Israel” (1). More recently, however, the community’s leaders have revised their position; see Tsedaka, *Understanding the Israelite-Samaritans*, 8.

5. John 4:4–26 describes Jesus’s encounter with the Samaritan woman (v. 9), who expresses surprise that Jesus, a Jew, would request a drink from her; she subsequently testifies on Jesus’s behalf to her village. Samaritans appear elsewhere in the New Testament too, often in contexts where they are foils for other groups, either Gentiles or Jews; see Matt 10:5 (where Jesus instructs his disciples to avoid the towns of Gentiles and Samaritans and seek out “the lost sheep of Israel”), John 8:48 (where the Jews accuse Jesus of being a Samaritan and of being possessed by a devil), Luke 17:16 (which describes the healing of a leper who is also a Samaritan), and Acts 8 (which describes Philip’s successful mission to Samaria and the figure of Simon Magus).

it is as if we knew Jews only through the New Testament. The popular usage of the term “good Samaritan” itself often obscures the stereotyping that gave the Christian parable its power: a story about a figure whose compassion for a Jewish wayfarer was noteworthy precisely because of the poor reputation of Samaritans among Luke’s audience. Even a quick survey of ancient sources, however, reveals a far more documented, if complex and even contradictory, history than modern colloquial familiarity would suggest.

Samaritans in Antiquity Through the Eyes of Others

Searching for the origins of the Samaritans tends to lead down an array of ideological rabbit holes. Although a diverse array of sources is available, they tend to be deeply or at least implicitly polemical, and often stock characters—“the Samaritan” and “the Jew”—serve as foils for the identity-creation process of other parties. A brief survey of several key moments and sources will illustrate how others have seen Samaritans, as well as how Samaritans have seen themselves.

The classical Samaritan writings presented in this volume were likely composed—and committed to memory and, eventually, to writing—in the late third and fourth centuries CE, but the Samaritan community is much older. As with the other Abrahamic traditions, Samaritan cultural history forms a complex nexus of canon, languages, liturgy and rituals, and traditions of exegesis. Thus, while Samaritanism acquired its still-recognizable contours in the third and fourth centuries—through its textual production, liturgical creativity, political engagement, and so forth—its roots stretch back into the same ancient soil from which Judaism and Christianity emerged, the Torah.⁶

Samaritans, like Jews, identify as Israelites; indeed, they regard themselves as the true keepers of Israelite tradition and Jews as wayward sectarians.⁷ Samaritans share much with the Jews, including a reverence for the Torah, but other texts considered biblical by Jews—the Prophets and the Writings of the Jewish Tanakh

6. There are obvious parallels with early Christianity and Islam, as well—traditions that likewise trace their origins to texts and traditions arising from ancient Israel. The affinity—however ambivalent it may be—between Jews and Samaritans, however, is arguably closer than that between other groups, as evident in antiquity and even in the legal status of Samaritans in modern Israeli law (where identity cards and passports of Samaritans label the bearer as a *yehudi shomroni*, “Samaritan Jew”). See Schreiber, *Comfort of Kin*, especially 52–68, where the intervention of Yitzhak Ben-Zvi on behalf of the Samaritans is described.

7. Medieval Samaritan chronicles trace the origin of the schism between Jews and Samaritans to the actions of Eli (1 Sam 1–4), who arrogated the high priesthood to himself and set up a schismatic temple in Shiloh; this temple is the direct ancestor of the schismatic temple in Jerusalem. See Kartveit, “Origin of the Jews and Samaritans.”

(the Christian Old Testament)—do not constitute part of Samaritan scriptures. Nor do the Samaritans hold as sacred any works outside the Pentateuch. It is not that the Samaritans were unaware of the Prophets and the Writings; it seems that in the wake of their schism with the Jewish community in the Hasmonean period, they specifically repudiated these other works, most likely because of the central role that Jerusalem (rather than Mount Gerizim) played in them.⁸ Indeed, within Samaritan tradition, the name “Samaritans,” or in Hebrew *Shomronim*, does not primarily imply an affiliation with the geographical region of Samaria (*Shomron*), the seat of the kingdom of Israel in the north. Rather, they embrace their role as *shomerim*—“keepers” or “guardians”—who maintain fidelity to what they understand to be the pure Israelite tradition that they alone keep, including the Torah-only tradition.⁹ The complicated relations of the Samaritan community with other religious communities in antiquity make the appearance of parallels between Samaritan and Jewish or Christian traditions particularly intriguing, as such resonances can be attributed to common traditions centuries in the past or explained as independent, unrelated developments, or as developments in one community transmitted to another through recurring contact. In general, as the poems translated in this volume reveal, Samaritan communities (like Jews, and also like Christians) were part of a larger common culture in late antiquity on which they impressed their own distinct inflection.

As a consequence of their loyalty to an austere Pentateuchal canon, the Samaritans do not accept as scriptural the Jewish and Christian works in which Samaritans as such are first depicted. We may not be surprised that polemical works such as Ezra and Nehemiah found no welcome in the Samaritan Bible; other works, such as Psalms, while less overtly problematic, were likely regarded as alien because they bear a strong stamp of Judahite tradition and a history of connection to worship in the Jerusalem Temple (as opposed to Mount Gerizim).¹⁰ Just as importantly, the Samaritan Pentateuch (SamP) itself

8. See the discussion in Beckwith, “Formation.” As Beckwith notes, not all writings outside the Torah were explicitly problematic from a Samaritan perspective, but their unilateral rejection of most of the Jewish canon served as an unambiguous marker of their distinct religious identity.

9. Indeed, the modern Samaritans maintain a careful distinction between their identity as “guardians” and those who are simply from the geographic region of Samaria (*shomronim*, or “Samaritans”), although the identities in practice can overlap. The Samaritans’ self-understanding as “keepers of tradition” can be found in sources as early as the church fathers; see Pummer, *Early Christian Authors on Samaritans*. Also central to Samaritan identity is their reverence for Mount Gerizim as the chosen locus of the temple; they reject the Jewish identification of Mount Zion as the Temple Mount.

10. As Beckwith notes, “The rejection of the Prophets and Hagiographa would have left the Samaritans without any account of the history of their forbearers between the death of Moses and recent times. In due time they made good this lack by producing chronicles, which drew upon the Jewish scriptures and upon traditions of their own which gave them a more distinguished past” (“Formation,” 86).

differs from the Jewish Masoretic Text (MT) in key ways, notably its affirmations of the importance of the Samaritan holy site, Mount Gerizim, over against Jewish attachment to Mount Zion.

The complicated (and ultimately irretrievable) origins of the Samaritan community, and by extension the Samaritan Torah and liturgy, are bound up in its long entanglement with Judeans and thus Jews. One key moment in this history was the fall of the Northern Kingdom (which included Samaria) to the Assyrians in 722 BCE. When the Kingdom of Israel fell, at least some refugees from the north presumably fled south, bringing with them any number of texts, traditions, and understandings, including perhaps the kernel of what would become the Deuteronomistic tradition. (It is worth noting that Jerusalem and Zion are never mentioned in Deuteronomy, even in the MT; SamP Deut 27:4, however, describes Moses commanding that stones from the Jordan be used to build an altar on Mount Gerizim. This altar anticipates the temple to come.) Later, when Nebuchadnezzar II's soldiers deported the political and intellectual elites of Judah to Babylonia in the sixth century BCE, they left behind any number of faithful, if impoverished, Israelites (including some who no doubt yearned for a return to Samaria) among the Judahites.¹¹

Already in the Hebrew Bible, in the postexilic books of Ezra and Nehemiah, Samaritans are portrayed as antagonists of the community of returning Judean exiles. Their hostility reflects the rift between the cultural elites (embodied by Ezra and Nehemiah) who had been deported to Babylonia and returned to resume control of Judean society under Persian protection, on the one hand, and those who had never left the Land and had faithfully kept ancestral traditions and thus viewed themselves as “the keepers” (*ha-shomerim*, i.e., the Samaritans), on the other. The historical text of 2 Kgs 17, however, names this population “Cutheans” (*Kutim*), a derogatory term that distances them from Judeans.¹²

The origins of the Samaritan community lie in the tension between, on the one hand, a synthesis of these northern traditions from Samaria with closely related traditions from the Southern Kingdom and, on the other, divisions among communities that were exacerbated by the experience of the Babylonian

11. For a discussion of the early history of the Samaritans, from the Assyrian period to the late Roman period (and thus including early Christianity as well as early Judaism), see Knoppers, *Jews and Samaritans*. Concise and useful summaries of Jewish and Christian traditions of Samaritan origins can be found in Pummer, *Samaritans*, 10–25. Also important are the essays in Zsengellér, *Samaria, Samaritans, Samaritans*; Hjelm, “Samaritans,” is especially helpful in articulating the challenges in writing about Samaritans as a distinctive group.

12. The term *Kutim* / “Cutheans” derives from 2 Kgs 17:24, 30, where “Kuthites” are among the deportees resettled in Samaria by the Assyrians. This association of Samaritans with Cutheans is polemical, as it assigns the Samaritans an origin outside the land of Israel; essentially, the rabbis use this nomenclature to reciprocate the Samaritan denial of the Judean “authenticity” of the returnees from Babylonian exile.

destruction of Judah. In this period, “keepers of tradition” can refer to those who retained an ancestral attachment to Samaria and its variants of Israelite sacred history and traditions, alongside those who were similarly faithful to the Judean versions of the same. Thus, the Samaritans with whom Ezra and Nehemiah clash in the period of Persian restoration should not be understood as “pagans” or aliens, although that is how texts such as 2 Kgs 17 depict them; instead, they are Israelites (with roots in the Kingdom of Israel) whose history does not include the experience of Babylonian exile, but who nonetheless experienced displacement (from the north), subjugation, and occupation. This gulf in terms of religious outlook represents an early “parting of the ways” between Jewish (Judean) Israelites and their Samaritan Israelite kin. Ezekiel vividly describes the Jewish idea that God abandoned Jerusalem and Judah to dwell with the Jewish (Judean) Israelites in Babylon, while those left behind believed they were the ones keeping the faith alive in its true form on its native soil. Furthermore, in the eyes of those Judeans who returned from Babylonian exile, the very traditions so faithfully kept by those who were never exiled preserved not divine ideals but rather the wayward practices that resulted in the exile in the first place. Faithfulness was regarded as wayward stubbornness. But for the Samaritans, who in their medieval chronicles refer to Jews as “the erroneous ones,” “rebels,” “heretics,” and “people of error,” it is clear that the same response of rejection ran in the other direction, as well.¹³

These communal fissures and recombinations suggest the complexity of the relationship between these two communities, two populations that shared so much (including nearly identical Torahs) but also repeatedly sought to distinguish themselves from each other. But it bears remembering that in antiquity the Samaritans played an ongoing role in negotiations of Jewish identity and its boundaries precisely because of their own identity as “Israelites” who were emphatically not “Judeans/Jews.” Jewish historical experience was shaped by the experience of surviving exile, while Samaritan identity emerged from the experience of conquests and occupations by parties at times alien and in other cases kin. The differences between Samaritan and Judean Israelites were subsequently amplified by theological differences that likely emerged over time as ways of asserting boundaries through rival claims concerning whose customs of worship were correct and, eventually, whose Torah was correct.

Over the centuries, these differences widened into an unbridgeable breach. The gulf between the two communities is symbolized to this day by disagreement over the location of God’s chosen site of worship: Mount Zion for the Jews but Mount Gerizim (near modern Nablus, ancient Shechem) for the Samaritans. Furthermore, while the Jews and Samaritans share a reverence for the

13. Stenhouse, “Chronicle of Abu ’l-Fath.”

Torah, which is venerated as a scroll in the synagogues of both communities, the Samaritan text is written in a distinctive alphabet (a form of the old Hebrew alphabet, in contradistinction to the “Assyrian”—Aramaic—square letters of postexilic Jewish writing).¹⁴ In terms of differences between the Samaritan text and the MT, the Samaritan offers fewer anthropomorphic descriptions of God, employs slightly more decorous language in some instances, includes passages that are paralleled elsewhere in the Torah but not in the MT, and (most significantly) posits Mount Gerizim as the place where sacrifices should be offered when the Israelites enter Canaan (SamP Deut 27:4). When the differences are few, they bear even more cultural weight. Thus, while it can be difficult for archaeologists to distinguish between Jewish and Samaritan settlements and synagogues, we can assume that those who lived there knew who they were—and what spaces they considered sacred, whom they could marry, and what authorities they could trust.

According to Jewish biblical sources, Samaritan gestures toward reunification in the period of Ezra and Nehemiah were rebuffed, and distrust and disagreement hardened into mutual animosity by the time of the Second Temple. The parable of the good Samaritan in the New Testament hinges on the surprising idea that a Samaritan would become the benefactor of a Jerusalemite. In the passage, Jesus offers the parable in response to the question “And who is my neighbor?”

Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two *denarii* and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed mercy on him.” And Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.” (Luke 10:30–37, RSV, adapted)

The parable turns on the assumption that the man’s presumed kin—the priest and the Levite—do not act as his “fellows,” while the Samaritan, who is expected to shun the wounded Jew, acts with tremendous compassion. Community and

14. For references to writing in “Assyrian” characters, see m. Megillah 1:8; 2:2; m. Yadayim 4:5.

fellowship are matters of choice rather than kinship, of behavior rather than blood. This parable demonstrates the creation of community by demonstrating that even a Samaritan can act in a way that joins him to the fellowship.¹⁵

Given the ethnic, ritual, and theological affinities of Samaritans and Jews for each other, Samaritans seem to have challenged the boundaries of Judaism in a way that Christians did not. We see Jewish engagement with Samaritans in Jewish sources, where Samaritans appear in both narrative and legal contexts in ways that allow the rabbinic authors to discuss boundary definitions: Where are the lines between “in” and “out”? Just as Jews served as literary foils for the creation and articulation of Christian self-understanding in the New Testament and patristic writings, rabbinic sources deploy Samaritans, often as stock characters (akin to the Gentile philosopher, emperor, and matron), in their own literary works—and they do so more often and in more complicated ways, given the vast quantity and temporal span of this body of writing.¹⁶ One passage from *Genesis Rabbah*, the early and influential collection of rabbinic interpretations of Genesis, highlights the subtle and nuanced relationship to Samaritans that typifies rabbinic understandings—polemical and otherwise—of these (estranged or accepted) kin. The text depicts an argument over the relative merits of Mount Zion and Mount Gerizim (a motif also invoked in John 4:20).

Rabbi Jonathan was going up to pray in Jerusalem, when he reached that Palatinus¹⁷ and saw there a certain Samaritan (חזק שמרתי).¹⁸ He asked him, “Where are you going?” He (Rabbi Jonathan) replied to him, “To pray in Jerusalem.” “And would it not be better to pray at this holy mountain than at that dunghill of a house?” he (the Samaritan) asked. “In what way is it blessed?” he (Rabbi Jonathan) inquired. (The Samaritan responded:) “Because it was not submerged by the waters of the Flood.”

Now the *halakhah* (on the subject) was forgotten¹⁹ for a moment by Rabbi Jonathan, but his ass-driver said to him, “Rabbi! If you will permit

15. The story of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:4–42) likewise uses a Samaritan as a foil for the Jews. This story, which recalls betrothal scenes from the Hebrew Bible, recounts a conversation between a Samaritan woman and Jesus, whom she addresses as a Jew. The exchange is intellectually robust and concludes with the woman recognizing Jesus as the messiah—showing that she sees the truth more clearly than the Jews whom she expected to antagonize her.

16. For a recent essay that summarizes the evolution of “Cutheans” from wayward kin to (functional) non-Jewish outsiders, see Lehnardt, “If a Cuthean Comes.”

17. The term פלאטנוס (lit., “palace”) refers to a royal residence and here indicates specifically “that palace”—Mount Gerizim, the house of the King of Kings (that is, the deity) in Samaritan tradition.

18. The parallel version in SongR 4:3 (25a) reads “a certain Cuthean” (חזק כותי), a term that suggests greater distancing from the community; it also inserts the same term later in this passage, when the ass-driver responds to the Samaritan.

19. Lit., “hidden from the eyes of.” The parallel in SongR reads, “The matter was hidden.”

me, I will answer him.” “Do so,” he said. He responded: “If (this mountain is) among the high mountains, then it is written, ‘And all the high mountains were covered’ (Gen 7:19). Or if (this mountains is) among the low ones, the verse ignored it.”²⁰

Rabbi Jonathan immediately dismounted from his ass and made him (the driver) ride three miles (in his place), and he applied three verses to him: “There shall be no barren males or females among you or your cattle” (Deut 7:14)—i.e., even among your cattle drivers;²¹ “Your forehead (*rakkatekh*) is like a pomegranate split open” (Song 4:3)—i.e., even the emptiest (*rekanim*) among you are as full of answers as a pomegranate [is full of seeds]; and thus it is written, “No weapon that is fashioned against you shall prevail; and any tongue that contends with you in dispute, you shall defeat” (Isa 54:17).²²

This passage displays an awareness of Samaritan beliefs concerning the chosenness of their sacred mountain, alongside the assumption of a polemic against Jewish veneration of Mount Zion, even after the destruction of their temple (one to which Jews would need a ready response). The passage does not assume that their manner of worship is different, only the preferred location: the Samaritan even proposes that the Jew worship on Mount Gerizim instead of Mount Zion. The Samaritan is depicted as offering a distinctly Samaritan reading of Genesis—invoking the biblical text to argue for the superiority of Mount Gerizim in the context of sacred, universal history. Perhaps most intriguingly, the Samaritan’s argument leaves the rabbi speechless, and it is his ass-driver who keeps his wits and is able to reply. The Samaritan is, in short, a potentially persuasive, albeit estranged, kinsman.

The Samaritans do not figure only in rabbinic exegesis, however. They are even more prominent in halakhic writings. In early rabbinic legal writings—the Mishnah and Tosefta—the Samaritans (often derogated as *Kutim*/“Cutheans”) occupy an explicitly marginal place: not precisely Jewish, but not precisely non-Jewish. In m. Berakhot 7:1, a Samaritan is counted in the quorum needed for the recitation of grace after meals (a right denied to a *nokhri*, a non-Jew), in m. Demai 3:4, a Samaritan miller is equated with a boorish (but Jewish) miller, and in m. Demai 7:4, Jews are permitted to consume Samaritan wine. At the same

20. SongR 4:3 (25a) adds, “With that reply, that Cuthean was silenced, and he could not find a response.” The ass-driver’s response to the Samaritan’s assertion argues that Mount Gerizim was indeed covered by the Flood, for if it were truly a high mountain, then Gen 7:19 would have applied to it, and otherwise, we can assume it was covered because scripture did not even see fit to mention it. The gist is that Samaritan tradition, and Samaritan pride in Mount Gerizim, is in error.

21. “Barren” here is understood as “devoid of learning.” A learned response is one’s “offspring.”

22. GenR 32:10, in Theodor and Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabbah*, 1:296–97; the parallel in SongR 4:3 (25a) is later and somewhat more expansive.

time, a tradition in *m. Rosh Hashanah* 2:2 recalls how Samaritans interfered with the signal fires used to announce the new year, and *m. Shevi'it* 8:10 compares Samaritan bread, hyperbolically, to pork. While *m. Berakhot* 8:8 notes that one may say “Amen” after a blessing is recited by a Samaritan, it specifies that one may do so only after the Samaritan has concluded his prayer—presumably to ensure that he does not insert references to Mount Gerizim and, in essence, make his blessing sectarian. And *m. Ketubbot* 3:1 includes Samaritan maidens in a list of women of ambiguous status (in terms of whether they are owed damages in cases of rape), along with female proselytes and freed, converted slaves. Samaritans feature even more frequently in the *Tosefta*, although just as ambivalently. Ultimately, as Reinhard Pummer notes, “the early rabbis were not so much concerned with the Samaritans as such, but rather wanted to clarify their own identity by examining to whom, exactly, the halakhic rulings apply. The Samaritans emerge in the process as an ‘interstitial’ category, neither Jewish nor non-Jewish.”²³ Although it is a question meriting serious additional study, we must also consider the fact that Jewish writings in Palestine, where there was a robust, historical Samaritan community, would reflect a relationship with Samaritans different from what is found in sources arising in Babylonia, where there may have been a small Samaritan diaspora community but where Samaritans may have functioned more as figural, imaginary antagonists.²⁴

Samaritans are also the primary topic of the minor, extracanonical talmudic tractate *Kutim*—that is, “Cutheans.”²⁵ The final text of *Kutim* dates to after the closing of the Palestinian Talmud (ca. late fourth century CE), at the earliest.²⁶ While this text contains early traditions contemporary with the *Mishnah* and *Tosefta*, those earlier sources were reworked in late antiquity in order to create or more forcefully articulate boundaries between Samaritans and Jews. A comparison of tractate *Kutim* with earlier rabbinic sources reveals an increasing estrangement between Jews and Samaritans: practices that are permitted in the *Mishnah* and *Tosefta*, such as drinking Samaritan wine, are prohibited in *Kutim*. The tractate effectively makes the Samaritans “less Jewish” than they appear in earlier rabbinic sources. Even the term *kutim*, as opposed to *shomronim*, suggests the increasing estrangement between the groups.

23. Pummer, *Samaritans*, 68. See also Lightstone, “My Rival, My Fellow”; Schiffman, “Samaritans in Tannaitic Halakhah.”

24. Babylonian rhetorical use of Samaritans may, when viewed this way, recall the uses of “rhetorical Jews” in some early Christian writings; see Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy*.

25. There is no parallel tractate for other religious groups, who are, broadly speaking, understood to be addressed by the tractate *Avodah Zarah* (idol worship). The existence of tractate *Kutim* highlights the insider–outsider marginality of the Samaritans in Jewish antiquity.

26. On tractate *Kutim*, see Lehnardt, “Die Taube auf dem Garizim” and “Samaritans (*Kutim*).” Steven Fine of Yeshiva University is preparing a new edition of this important work.

Samaritans also feature prominently in early Christian writings, which do not contain any systematic treatments of Samaritans parallel to tractate Kutim but which nonetheless touch on a variety of subjects: the origins of the Samaritans and their identity as heretics or idolaters, the Samaritan Torah, Mount Gerizim, Samaritan theology and messianism, and Samaritan political involvement.²⁷ These Christian sources are often contradictory, because they are using Samaritans for rhetorical purposes (as foils for the pious or heretical), or because the ethnic term “Samaritan” is being used interchangeably with the geographical adjective “Samaritan” (specifically in discussions of whether Simon Magus, “from Samaria,” was a Samaritan), or simply because Samaritan traditions changed over time. Nevertheless, by charting agreements between early rabbinic and early Christian sources, it becomes possible to reconstruct, however tentatively, a reality—or perceived reality—of Samaritans in antiquity. Even as early Jewish and Christian sources deploy these estranged kin and fractious neighbors as rhetorical foils for issues of internal identity politics, they offer oblique insights into the place and perception of Samaritans within the larger world of late antique society.²⁸

For many modern, nonspecialist readers, knowledge of the Samaritans begins and ends with their own sacred texts, which are emphatically not Samaritan works and which approach Samaritans from the role they can play in shaping Jewish and Christian identity. In short, popular understanding of the Samaritans is wholly dependent on Christian and Jewish sources, and not works authored by the Samaritans themselves.

We are lucky, however, to have a number of Samaritan works from the late third and fourth centuries CE in hand, alongside various material artifacts.²⁹ We thus can work to reconstruct the richness of Samaritan society not only from without but also from within.³⁰ These texts and the traditions they contain, along with inscriptions and objects uncovered by archaeologists, illuminate the Samaritan world from within, countering the ancient sources that regard them as categorically “other.” If we had only literature *about* Samaritans, our understanding of their vigorous creativity in this momentous time period would be woefully incomplete.

27. See Pummer, *Early Christian Authors*.

28. Jews play a similar boundary-defining role in Christianity in this period; for an analysis that highlights this particular rhetorical use of one religious tradition as a foil, and boundary definer, for another, see Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism and Christian Orthodoxy*.

29. On Samaritan material culture, see the essays in Crown, *Samaritans*, especially the following chapters: Pummer, “Samaritan Material Remains”; Pummer, “Inscriptions”; Sixdenier, “Elements of Samaritan Numismatics.” For a summary of the status of Samaritan archaeology overall, see Dar, “Archaeological Aspects.” Also note the discussion of synagogues below.

30. The sources from late antiquity do not parallel all the genres we have from Jewish and Christian sources; in particular, Samaritan legal (halakhic) writings are not preserved until the medieval period.

For Samaritans, by Samaritans

Samaritan writings from late antiquity are largely “inward” in orientation. They were written for use in religious worship and study, and unlike the rabbinic sources examined above, they are less interested in issues such as boundary delineation. Even so, the texts reveal a great deal about the communities in which they were created and preserved. The use of Hebrew and Aramaic by Samaritans reveals the close kinship between Samaritans and Jews in particular, as well as cultural affinities with Palestinian Christians in late antiquity. On the other hand, even though the Samaritan Torah and the Jewish Torah are essentially identical in content, they are radically different in appearance: Samaritan Torah scrolls, and Samaritan writings in general, are written in a distinctive ornamented script that closely resembles preexilic (Paleo-Hebrew) writing, in contradistinction to the square “Assyrian” (Aramaic) letters used in most contexts by Jews in the postexilic period. The very choice of script thus becomes a marker of Samaritan difference from Jews.

The core of the Samaritan literary canon is unquestionably the Torah, both in the Hebrew original (SamP) and its Aramaic translation, the Samaritan Targum (SamT). The Torah is not the only sacred text of the Samaritans, however. The classical, nonscriptural literary canon of the community appears to have originated within a single, late third- and early fourth-century CE lineage: Amram Dare (Amram the Elder, who was also known as Tute [Titus]); his son, Marqe; and Marqe’s son, Ninna. According to tradition, Amram participated actively in the Samaritan reforms of the revolutionary Baba Rabbah, and he is also the first Samaritan *payyetan* (liturgical poet) whose works survive. His son Marqe (Marcus, in Latin) authored the central exegetical work of Samaritan tradition, *Tibat Marqe* (Ark [i.e., anthology] of Marqe)—also known as *Memar Marqe* (Speech of Marqe).³¹ While that prose work remains his most-studied literary product, he also wrote numerous *piyyutim* (liturgical poems; plural form of *piyyut*), many of which remain in the Samaritan prayer service. Marqe’s son, Ninna (Nonnus), was also a poet, although only one major composition by him survives, alongside one or two shorter works of dubious attribution. The hymns of these three poets constitute core components of the Samaritan liturgy down to the present day.

Largely because of the transformations that the Samaritan community underwent during the fourth century CE—including changes in ritual and exegesis shaped by Amram and Marqe within the larger context of Baba Rabbah’s “reformation”—this period can be seen as the classical era of Samaritan literature.

31. Citations of *Tibat Marqe* in this work follow the critical edition by Ben-Hayyim, *Tibat Marqe* (TM).

The writings of Amram, Marqe, and Ninna shaped the Samaritan liturgy as it existed throughout the Middle Ages and into the present. While their poetry has garnered less prestige (and less scholarly attention) than Samaritan writings in prose—notably the exegetical compilation *Tibat Marqe*, the historical chronicles, and legal (halakhic) works—these poems constitute a significant component of the Samaritan religious experience. Indeed, these poems demonstrate that the Samaritan community participated fully in the “poetic renaissance” of late antiquity, when liturgical poetry became a central part of religious ritual throughout the Roman Empire among Christians, Jews, and Samaritans alike.

The body of classical Samaritan poetry—the poetry of the late third and fourth centuries CE, written by Amram, Marqe, and Ninna—is gemlike: small but precious, easily obscured yet quick to sparkle. In this study, a selection of these poems will be lifted out of the shadows and held up to the light, so that all may gain a better sense of these treasures.

Aside from the Torah (written in Hebrew but using a preexilic style of script), the texts composed by the Samaritans in late antiquity were written in Samaritan Aramaic, a form of Palestinian Aramaic closely akin to Jewish Palestinian Aramaic. Samaritan Aramaic was the vernacular of the Samaritan community until about the tenth through twelfth centuries CE, when it was supplanted by Samaritan Palestinian Arabic.³² The liturgical poetry of Amram, Marqe, and Ninna, as well as the SamT, were all written in Samaritan Aramaic; postclassical Samaritan poetry, by contrast, contains much more Hebrew.³³ In terms of both liturgical and daily language, Samaritans were no different from their neighbors in the land of Israel in late antiquity. Certainly in terms of their oral and auditory lives—whether speaking in the synagogue or in the street—Jews, Samaritans, and Christians would have found one another mutually comprehensible.

Although the liturgy of the Samaritan synagogue in late antiquity cannot be reconstructed precisely, we do know that the Torah occupied the place of pride. In general, the liturgy consisted of the recitation of a Torah passage framed by the reading of hymns and prayers. In order to permit more of the Torah to be included in the service, anthologies of Torah verses called *qatafim* (קטפים, “gleanings”) were read. *Qatafim* appear to be some of the earliest elements of Samaritan liturgy, and they were prepared for each of the five books of the Torah (serving as condensed or abbreviated versions of each book); other *qatafim* were compiled for specific Sabbaths, holy days, and life-cycle events, or to draw together teachings from the Torah on specific themes. The various readings,

32. Kaufman, “Dialectology.” The *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon (CAL)* classifies Samaritan Aramaic, along with Jewish Palestinian Aramaic and Christian Palestinian Aramaic, as forms of “Palestinian Aramaic.”

33. Florentin, *Late Samaritan Hebrew*.

hymns, and prayers were assembled into a prayer book known as the *Defer*; two-thirds of the hymns in the *Defer* were composed by Amram, Marqe, and Ninna. In practice, however, we can assume that the liturgy was a product of oral literacy: while the prayer leader may have had written texts or cues available, most of the community would have participated by reciting memorized passages or by repeating portions of a text read aloud.

Just as classical Samaritan texts and practices reveal an obvious, if complex and mutable, kinship with late antique Jewish modes of writing and living, given the importance of exegesis among both Jews and Christians in this period, we should not be surprised that Samaritans in antiquity produced a tradition of haggadic scriptural interpretation that is comparable to those bodies of writing, although it is neither as voluminous nor as diffuse. The SamT, rather like the rabbinic Targum Onqelos (and the Greek versions of the Torah, known collectively as the Septuagint), lacks haggadic expansions; the major exegetical work—*Tibat Marqe*—consists of six relatively brief chapters, two of which date (at least in large part) to roughly the fourth century CE (i.e., the time of Marqe) and three of which are later.³⁴ Samaritan ritual systems likewise reveal overt similarities with rabbinic practice—including nomenclature, such as the use of “synagogues” and the composition of *piyyutim*—even as they reveal commonalities with early Christian modes of piety too. Indeed, even more than language, scriptural versions, and exegetical traditions, a shared love of liturgical poetry may be most revealing of the deep cultural affinities linking these three entangled religious traditions.

Samaritan Liturgy and Poetry: The Scholarly Context

As distinct from discussion of Samaritans in the context of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, the modern study of Samaritan culture, history, liturgy, and literature in late antiquity began in the early twentieth century.³⁵ The liturgical poetry of this community was a key resource for scholars early on. The two most important early scholars were Moses Gaster, whose history of the Samaritans relied largely on their own historical chronicles and his communications with contemporary Samaritans, and A. E. Cowley, whose 1909 edition of the Samaritan liturgy remained the standard edition of their prayer texts (in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic) for over half a century.³⁶ Indeed, Cowley’s edition was supplanted only in the mid-twentieth century by linguistic expert

34. It is telling that Ben-Hayyim describes *TM* as a “midrash” in his edition.

35. By far the most useful tool for gaining an overview of scholarly work on the Samaritans (spanning the biblical period to the modern) is Pummer, “Samaria/Samaritans.”

36. Gaster, *Samaritans*; Cowley, *Samaritan Liturgy*. Brown’s “Critical Edition of the Ancient Samaritan *Defer*” is less well known but contains translations of portions of Cowley’s text.

Ze'ev Ben-Hayyim's five-volume compendium, which offers the best editions presently available.³⁷ Ben-Hayyim's edition of *Tibat Marqe* likewise replaced John Macdonald's edition, although the latter remains popular for the accessibility of its English.³⁸ Abraham Tal's critical editions of both the Samaritan Aramaic translation of the Torah—the Samaritan Targum—and the Samaritan Pentateuch itself marked a foundational step in the study of Samaritan culture; Tal provided scholars with essential texts and, through his lexicon of Samaritan Aramaic, a tool with which to read them.³⁹ Much of the broader cultural and contextual work has been undertaken by Pummer and Alan D. Crown. Since the 1980s, they and their students have helped bring the study of Samaritan texts, traditions, and practices from antiquity to the present into the larger discourse of religious studies.⁴⁰

In recent decades, building on the foundation of twentieth-century scholarship, Samaritan studies has begun to blossom into a full-fledged discipline. Steven Fine has drawn attention to the archaeology and material culture of the Samaritans in antiquity, while Moshe Florentin's work has highlighted the richness of medieval Samaritan poetry.⁴¹ A. S. Rodrigues Pereira included works by Marqe in his volume on Aramaic poetry, a project that stands out for its ambition to bring linguistically related works together across religious divisions.⁴² In step with these scholarly developments, the Samaritan community in Israel has in recent years become newly engaged in "outreach" under the leadership of Benyamim Tsedakah, whose work has included a volume containing English translations of the Samaritan Torah and the Masoretic Torah in parallel format.⁴³

Collectively, these scholars have articulated the diverse facets of Samaritan culture in late antiquity—what we might call early Samaritanism, on the model

37. Ben-Hayyim, *Literary and Oral Tradition*.

38. MacDonald's *Memar Marqah* is based on an inferior MS, the eighteenth-century British Museum 7923, but his edition is still widely used in Anglophone scholarship. Ben-Hayyim's *TM* provides editions of two earlier MSS that represent two different recensions: a complete sixteenth-century manuscript from Shechem and an earlier fragmentary manuscript. The sixteenth-century manuscript is the basis for the electronic edition available through *CAL*. Ben-Hayyim translated the Aramaic portions of *TM* into Modern Hebrew.

39. For the Samaritan Aramaic translation of the Torah, see Tal, *Samaritan Targum*. For the Pentateuch, see Tal, *Samaritan Pentateuch*. For the lexicon, see Tal, *Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic*. Schorch's *Leviticus* is the first volume of a projected six-volume critical edition of the Samaritan Pentateuch, overseen by Schorch.

40. The bibliography of writings by Crown and Pummer is extensive, and many of the most important works are listed in Pummer, "Samaria/Samaritans"; this is in many ways an update of Crown and Pummer, *Bibliography of the Samaritans*. Particularly useful as a comprehensive overview is Pummer, *Samaritans*.

41. Fine, "For This Schoolhouse Is Beautiful"; Florentin, *Samaritan Elegies*. See also the very useful survey in Dar, "Archaeological Aspects of Samaritan Research." For a reading of the Samaritan material in a more general context, see Patrich, "Urban Space in Caesarea Maritima."

42. Rodrigues Pereira, *Studies in Aramaic Poetry*.

43. Tsedaka and Sullivan, *Israelite Samaritan Version of the Torah*.

of early Judaism and early Christianity—when all three religious traditions took forms still recognizable today. What remains to be done, however, is to study classical Samaritan sources with the same sophisticated methods that have been applied to the analogous material from early Christianity and, as is increasingly the case, early Judaism. That is, the philological study of Samaritan texts needs to be supplemented by the theoretical models and tools of literary, ritual, and performative studies in order to elucidate not only the rich content of Samaritan culture but also the ways in which that culture was fully embedded in and integrated with late antique society more generally.

Samaritan Liturgy and Poetry: The Samaritan Context

Much of Samaritan history from late antiquity, including the history of Samaritan culture, remains unknown and, likely, unknowable. But we do possess a rich body of liturgical poetry from this period, along with the early portions of *Tibat Marqe* and the SamT. These works indicate the broad contours of the contexts in which classical Samaritan liturgical poetry emerged. Samaritans shed light on a variety of late antique phenomena: they were actively engaged in internal reform movements and anti-imperial rebellions; their literature, as noted above, was varied, even if the corpus was small; and as poetry, these works must be studied as part of the poetic renaissance of late antiquity. Each of these three contexts—social, exegetical, and literary—will be explored in brief here, with an eye toward contextualizing the discussions of individual poems in this anthology.

The Social and Geopolitical Context

The earliest examples of Samaritan poetry date to the late third or early fourth century, shortly after the likely date of the reforms of Baba Rabbah. According to Samaritan tradition, Baba Rabbah was the firstborn son of the Samaritan high priest Nathaniel; he instituted his religious reforms in response to a period of persecution by the Roman authorities in the third century CE (perhaps during the rule of Severus Alexander [222–35] or slightly earlier, under Caracalla [211–17]). Initially, rather than encouraging his community to participate in anti-imperial rebellions, he directed their energies inward, toward pietistic practices. He reopened synagogues and dispatched deputies—four lay Israelites and three priests (seven men in all)—to lead the Samaritan communities in prayer and Torah study.⁴⁴ (Legend also credits Baba Rabbah with waging war against the

44. At the time of Baba Rabbah (ca. third century CE), there were robust Samaritan settlements along the coast of Palestine, as well as in Egypt, Carthage, and Rome, among other locations. Given

Romans, and with evading Jewish assassination plots.) According to the Samaritan chronicles, one of these seven “sages” (*khakima*) was the priest Amram Dare, the earliest of the classical Samaritan liturgical poets and the father of Marqe. The Samaritan historical tradition, then, suggests a connection between the rise of Samaritan liturgical poetry and a period of broad—indeed, legendary—religious reformation.⁴⁵ The fourth century was a momentous period for the Roman Empire as a whole and a transformative one for the Samaritans as well.

Initially, the Christian emperors of Rome did not attempt to exert control over their non-Christian subjects. Only with the emperor Honorius in 404 CE did the early Byzantine rulers begin to issue decrees against Jews, Samaritans, and “idolaters” in the land of Israel—with questionable and at best uneven enforcement.⁴⁶ The Theodosian (438) and Justinian (529–34) codes imposed restrictions on Samaritans as well as Jews, and these prohibitions serve as indicators of non-Christians’ activities. Eventually, oppression led to active unrest and a series of Samaritan uprisings. Two of these revolts attracted Jewish participants: the so-called Gallus revolt of 351 and the second, more impressive revolt of 614, when the Jews and Samaritans assisted the Persians in their brief conquest of Jerusalem. The first Samaritan uprising, however, dates to 484, during the reign of the emperor Zeno, who replaced the synagogue on Mount Gerizim with a church dedicated to Mary Theotokos after the rebellion was put down.⁴⁷ A minor revolt followed during the reign of Zeno’s successor, Anastasius I (r. 491–518), and a second major uprising occurred in 529.

While preceded and followed by spasms of imperial persecution and popular resistance, the fourth century CE seems to have been a period of relative peace and stability for the Samaritans.⁴⁸ It was in this period that the Samaritan community restored its holy precincts on Mount Gerizim, and there is evidence of interference from Jews, Christians, or polytheists.⁴⁹ It will be especially significant below in the current study that, in this period, the Samaritans also began to build impressive synagogues in Samaria and beyond, repurposing stones from

the legendary nature of the Baba Rabbah material, however, it is impossible to assign concrete locations to the places where his deputies might have served.

45. Pummer, *Samaritans*, 131–34.

46. For the wider context of this moment from the perspective of the Byzantine empire, see Doyle, *Honorius*.

47. For descriptions of the Samaritan rebellions as recalled (with some discrepancies among them) by John Malalas, Procopius of Caesarea, Choricus of Gaza, and Cyril of Scythopolis, see Pummer, *Early Christian Authors on Samaritans*.

48. On the Samaritan revolts in late antiquity in the Galilee region, see Di Segni, “Samaritan Revolts”; Sivan, *Palestine in Late Antiquity*. Also note Lieber, “You Have Been Skirting,” which addresses the Samaritan revolts from the Jewish perspective.

49. Di Segni, “Church of Mary Theotokos.”

destroyed Roman buildings and temples.⁵⁰ The poetry of Amram Dare, Marqe, and Ninna arose during this century of tranquility, on the heels of and in concert with Baba Rabbah's reformation, prior to the wave of imperial persecutions and concomitant revolts. Indeed, Samaritanism as we now know it took shape during this remarkable epoch, and it was this form of Samaritanism that was able to endure through the subsequent centuries of trauma and that has persisted, despite external pressures, to the present day. Although many Samaritan communities were destroyed during the uprisings of the sixth century, both literary sources and archaeological finds indicate the endurance and even renewal of Samaritan villages later in the same century.⁵¹

The theology and philosophy of the classical Samaritan writings are imprinted with the concerns of the late antique intellectual world. In particular, Marqe's later writings reveal a specifically Samaritan understanding of the idea of the Logos as a kind of personified or active law, although he develops this idea in two very different ways. In his prose work *Tibat Marqe*, he describes Moses in terms that are distinctly Logos-like: he existed incorporeally prior to creation and he understands the very mind of God.⁵² In his poetry, however, Marqe treats the Torah itself as a kind of incarnation, a tangible manifestation of the divine, as is especially visible in several of the poems included in this volume where the Torah acts, possesses agency, and is not practically distinguished from its divine author.⁵³ The tension between these treatments of Moses and the Torah may reflect the life-setting of each work. In *Tibat Marqe*, composed for a scholarly setting, Moses (the paragon of learning) acquires an aura of near-divinity, while in the poems intended for use in a liturgical setting, where the Torah scrolls manifest the divine connection to the community, it is the writing that is thus exalted. Indeed, throughout these poems, the boundaries between divine author, prophetic scribe, and revealed text can become difficult to discern.

Although the writings of Amram Dare, Marqe, and Ninna manifest a kind of organic Greco-Roman philosophy, their theology anticipates concerns that are even more fully developed in Islam. The language the Samaritan poems use to assert God's singularity sounds particularly striking to modern ears: insistent declarations that "there is no God but the one" recur throughout the compositions by Amram Dare, Marqe, and Ninna. Indeed, this phrase is just as much a liturgical cue as a line of poetry, and one that surely invited communal

50. For a concise summary of current understandings of Samaritan synagogues in antiquity (with particular attention to the vexing question of how they can be distinguished from Jewish synagogues), see Pummer, "Synagogues."

51. Di Segni, "Samaritan Revolts," 480; Magen, "Areas of Samaritan Settlement."

52. Broadie, *Samaritan Philosophy*, 73–87.

53. Lieber, "Scripture Personified."

participation. Even more evocative are litanies such as this one from Amram's corpus (Amram 1, ll. 17–21):

There is no God but our master,
 And no book like his Torah,
 And no true prophet like Moses,
 And no complete faithfulness,
 Nor truth, except his.⁵⁴

On the one hand, this language almost anticipates the popular Jewish Shabbat table-song “Ein Adir” (There is none so splendid), which catalogues qualities that unify God, Moses, the Torah, and the children of Israel.⁵⁵ That poem, however, most likely postdates Marqe by centuries and emerged in an entirely different context; the parallels simply reflect common concerns with articulating the uniqueness of God, scripture, community, and the prophet who signifies the bond among them and the desire to express such beliefs in an acrostic hymn. At the same time, these Marqan lines—along with the frequently repeated creedal phrase “There is no God but the one!”—echo what we now think of as the Islamic creed that “there is no God but God and Muhammed is his true prophet,” but the Samaritan poetry predates Muhammed by centuries. The influence of Islamic culture on medieval and modern Samaritan language and liturgy is evident: Arabic became the vernacular of the Samaritan community after the seventh century CE, as well as the language in which the prayer-book corpus of liturgical poetry presents many of the explanatory glosses, transitions, and ligatures (the headnotes that stipulate the occasions on which each poem may be performed). But both the poetic assertions of monotheism and the liturgical “catch phrases” that conclude many of the poems are native to Samaritan literature.⁵⁶ It seems that Islam and Samaritanism share a deep, organic commitment to an articulated monotheism that stresses the singularity of God, of prophet, and of scripture. As with the resonances between Samaritan and Jewish texts, the correspondence of Samaritan and Muslim motifs arises from a common worldview rather than from influence.

The Samaritans were fully present, organically involved participants in the culture of the land of Israel in late antiquity. They resisted imperial power with notable vigor (if little success), they transformed their culture in lasting ways that

54. Note the very similar passage in Amram 4, ll. 29–34.

55. For the text of the hymn, see 29828 in Davidson, *Thesaurus of Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry*, 1:140. Davidson does not offer a hypothesis on its date but notes that it is a *hakafah* poem for the holy day of Simkhat Torah. It seems likely to be a Sephardic poem and is presumably medieval in origin. It is also known as *Mipi El* (From the mouth of God), based on its refrain.

56. On ligatures, see Anderson and Giles, *Tradition Kept*, 359–60.

reveal a sense of assertiveness and confidence in both architectural and literary achievements, and their manner of expression reflects an awareness of Hellenistic lines of thinking that resonate with trends in Jewish writing, even as they anticipated creedal statements that would become closely aligned with Islam.

The Samaritan Literary Context

While the Samaritan community was never large and its written legacy is modest when viewed against the quantity of works surviving from Jewish and Christian communities of late antiquity, the textual heritage of the Samaritans remains significant for modern scholars of religion. The most commonly referenced work is the SamP, as it bears directly on the critical study of the Hebrew Bible and links the Samaritan tradition to the shared literary tradition of Jews and Christians. Modern writers have generally focused on locating and analyzing those places where the Samaritan Pentateuch differs from the MT of the Torah (and how it relates to other ancient witnesses, such as the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls). Yet, compared to the Christian and Jewish scriptures, the Samaritan canon possesses a radical simplicity, limited as it is to the five books of the Pentateuch, unvocalized and written in an archaic Hebrew script.

The brevity of the Samaritan canon, on the one hand, and its centrality to the liturgy on the other, shaped Samaritan poetry. Jewish and Christian liturgical poetry is richly intertextual, with every stanza and phrase marked by quotations of or allusions to verses and traditions from elsewhere in their scriptures. Samaritan poetry, by contrast, revolves around the key themes, episodes, and figures of the Torah—in particular the creation narratives of Gen 1–2 and the Sinai episode in Exod 19–20. Indeed, whereas Jewish poetry in particular often resembles a mosaic woven out of phrases from throughout the Hebrew Bible, the Samaritan poems focus on theological and theoretical matters, perhaps because the canon itself was already present in the liturgy through the recitation of the *qatafim*. The Samaritan poetry does not renarrate scriptural episodes in any linear way but rather explores them in an almost imagistic way, exhibiting a potent ritual function.

In general, while the Samaritan poetry by Amram, Marqe, and Ninna displays significant reliance on scriptural traditions, it is substantially independent of Samaritan exegetical traditions. Yose ben Yose and Ephrem the Syrian, from the Jewish and Christian traditions, respectively, both engage in complex but robust ways with traditions of biblical exegesis in their poetry. By contrast, classical Samaritan poetry routinely differs from the SamT, although it emerged in the same time period, and even more conspicuously from *Tibat Marqe*, despite the fact that both the prose and the poetic texts were produced by the same family.

Despite the obvious independence of Samaritan *piyyutim* from other early Samaritan writings—these compositions are not simply poeticized targum or exegesis—it makes sense to read contemporary works together. Examining the Samaritan poems in the context of the SamT helps us to understand both bodies of writing more fully.⁵⁷ Much of the SamT dates to roughly the same period as the classical *piyyutim*: Tal dates the earliest stratum (BL Or. MS 7562) to the age of Baba Rabba and his reforms (which may coincide with the canonization of the SamT), while the later layers (MS Nablus 6⁸¹ = MS 6 of the Shechem synagogue) may be dated several centuries later but still within late antiquity. The *piyyutim* often quote phrases from scripture in Aramaic (occasionally in Hebrew as well); rarely, however, do the quotations precisely align with the language preserved in the SamT. This lack of alignment itself suggests that scriptural translation was a fluid phenomenon in Samaritan antiquity—there was no “canonical” targum, and the text was freely “updated” over time. But variations in the Aramaic translation of the Hebrew text of the Torah probably did not hinder listeners from grasping allusions to scripture in Aramaic verse; they knew the Hebrew text well enough to discern and appreciate allusion even through the veil of translation. They could hear the scripture behind the Aramaic poetry without the aid of a targum.

While the SamT helps to illustrate the linguistic independence of the classical poets, a comparison of Samaritan *piyyut* to *Tibat Marqe*, the major exegetical work of Samaritan antiquity, highlights the exegetical creativity of both genres. *Tibat Marqe* in its entirety is attributed to Marqe, whose poetry is included here, and substantial portions of it can be reliably dated to roughly the same time period as the poems studied here. Parallels between *Tibat Marqe* and the poetry presented here are clearly discernible, especially their overlapping thematic interests, as both works display intense fascination with the exodus narrative, the Sinai narrative, and the figure of Moses. These resonances, which manifest themselves in narrative arcs, vivid imagery, and shared language, are noted in the commentaries. Alignments between *piyyutim* and *Tibat Marqe* are not as common as one might assume, however, even in the poems ascribed to the author of the midrash. Indeed, as the commentary in the translation highlights, the two bodies of writing often differ in subtle but important ways. Poetic rhetoric can also be more difficult to decipher because more ambiguous and elliptical than prose, more resonantly multivalent. Yet this does not mean that one should turn to *Tibat Marqe* for aid in interpreting Samaritan poetry. In fact, the opposite is true: reading *Tibat Marqe* in light of the poems explored here highlights robust liturgical and poetic elements in the midrash. These features of *Tibat*

57. Tal, *Samaritan Targum*; the introduction in vol. 3 is particularly useful as a resource for understanding the history of this work. See also Tal, “Samaritan Targum.”

Marqe are more likely rhetorical than performative, however—particularly the liturgical elements that open and close each book of the compendium.

The poetry embedded in *Tibat Marqe* is lovely but strikingly different in form from the liturgical poetry. For example, toward the end of book 1, there is an evocative lyric in which elements of the landscape anticipate the arrival of the Israelites as they cross over to freedom. The sea, the waters of Marah, the manna, the rocks, the valley, Sinai, the Jordan, Mount Gerizim, the hills, and the plains all beckon to the people, evocatively “calling to them silently” (כרו לון במשתוק).⁵⁸ It is a song of silence, and it is not included in the body of classical poetry but embedded within a prose text. The differences between liturgical *piyyut* and this “exegetical” poetry—in form, function, and rhetoric—merit study in their own right.

We are increasingly accustomed to examining the settings in which scriptural texts, translations, exegesis, and hymns were used and experienced by Jews and Christians as part of our attempt to understand the rich complexity of these works, and Samaritan *piyyutim* and their prescriptive ligatures benefit from the same consideration. In particular, it is essential to keep in mind that the poems were liturgical, meaning that they were performed as part of religious rituals, presumably in the presence of the Torah scroll. We should note that no passages were read directly from the scroll, nor does it seem that a targum was read as part of a Torah service, either as a living performance of translation that complemented a reading in Hebrew (e.g., like the Jewish targums in some synagogue practices and as presumed by the Mishnah) or as a substitute for the original-language text (as per the role of the Greek translation in Christianity).⁵⁹ While these practices are attested in synagogues and churches in antiquity, Samaritan ritual was distinctive. The physical presence of the scroll was central: *seeing* the scroll was the essential act, rather than *hearing* words read directly from it. While in Jewish worship the Torah scroll certainly has a symbolic function, it also has a very practical function in the Torah-reading ceremony; in the Samaritan synagogue, however, it is important almost exclusively as a symbol. The scroll’s presence as tangible evidence of revelation and covenant reifies the theology of the poetry. While we have models of poetry that relies on the detailed narrative content of the portion of scripture read on a given day to construct what can be understood as a variety of liturgical exegesis (notably from the Jewish tradition), the Samaritan model indicates that the *idea*

58. Thus the Leningrad MS; the other MS employed by Ben-Hayyim has simply “calling out to them” (כרו לון). The text is in *TM* 1 §71 (51ב–8, pp. 97–99).

59. For a concise summary of the state of scholarship on rabbinics, see the review essay by Visotzky, “Leaning Literary, Reading Rabbinics.” For a description of early Samaritan Sabbath observance—albeit one that relies heavily (of necessity) on medieval accounts—see Weiss, “Sabbath among the Samaritans.”

of revelation—represented by the Torah scroll itself—can be just as conducive to literary creativity.

Indeed, comparing *Tibat Marqe* to Marqe's poetry underscores how genre and context shape the themes and motifs of literary works. *Tibat Marqe* is a strongly philosophical work, each of its constituent chapters focuses on a specific idea or episode, and the earliest materials (which likely date to the time of Marqe, whether or not the attribution to him is correct) include chapters covering the deliverance from Egyptian bondage ("The Book of Wonders"), the Song at the Sea (Exod 15), and the sins of Israel (as in Deut 27:9–27). *Tibat Marqe*'s emphases on Moses, revelation, redemption, and sin are shared with the classical Samaritan *piyyutim*, but the poetry is not simply *Tibat Marqe* set to song. The poetry is far more elliptical, less linear, less narrative, and less grounded in the biblical "story," although it assumes extensive familiarity with the content of scripture. The poetry seems far less didactic—it is certainly less explanatory—and appears to be more invested in creating an experience and setting a mood than in interpreting scripture.

Samaritan Piyyutim in the Context of Late Antique Hymnography

The classical Samaritan *piyyutim* did not emerge in isolation. They constitute part of a broad turn toward liturgical poetry among not only Jews but also Christians. Indeed, the late third and early fourth centuries CE witnessed the flourishing of distinctive poetic traditions in Hebrew, Jewish Palestinian Aramaic (JPA), and Syriac, as well as in Samaritan Aramaic, and these works presaged the emergence of hymnody in Greek by the sixth century CE.

The liturgical poems of each community are distinctive, and direct dependence of a given tradition on another is unlikely: the differences are both too distinctive and too organic, and the linguistic and geographic spread too great. Nevertheless, the apparently sudden emergence of liturgical poetry across traditions and languages suggests that Jews, Christians, and Samaritans alike were responding to elements of their common culture. None of the Samaritan *piyyutim* attempt to replicate the aesthetics of biblical poetry in the way that the Qumranic Hodayot do.⁶⁰ The very Hebrew/Aramaic term *piyyut*, borrowed from the Greek word *poesis* (and thus cognate with the English words "poet" and "poetry"), suggests an awareness among Jews and Samaritans alike that these compositions reflected something novel and innovative. The novelty of liturgical hymns was relatively universal, regardless of religious community, but the specific manifestations of this newness reflected the distinct liturgies and aesthetics of the particular traditions.

60. On the Hodayot, see Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer*; Nitzan, "Prayers for Peace."

Jewish, Christian, and Samaritan hymnographies do have some elements in common, however. For example, a number of poems by the Samaritan poet Marqe, the early Jewish poet Yose ben Yose, and the Syriac-speaking Christian poet Ephrem—three different traditions, three different languages—straddle the boundaries between poetry and prose. They are rhythmic but lack rhyme, and although they may be organized by alphabetical acrostics, they are not elaborate in form; they display regular strophic structure, perhaps with a refrain. Yose's Shofarot poems, and also some of his Avodah poems, share with some of Marqe's works (in particular) a kind of unhurried capaciousness created by long lines and expansive stanzas. These works are all undeniably poetic—rich with parallelism, rhythm, and consonance and assonance, and composed in stanzaic form—and yet they share a common aesthetic that sets them apart from the poetic forms that would come to dominate in Judaism and Christianity in the sixth and seventh centuries, and in medieval Samaritan poetry as well.

Whereas Yose and Ephrem share formal elements (broadly speaking) with Marqe, Marqe's language is essentially the same as that found in the corpus of JPA poetry. The JPA poems are themselves a diverse assemblage (spanning the fourth through seventh centuries), and the relationship of these poems to the emerging body of Hebrew poetry, also written by and for Jews, remains unclear. Nevertheless, the language of the JPA poems and of the poems by Amram, Marqe, and Ninna is essentially the same, and they would have been mutually comprehensible without mediation or translation.

The Performative Context

While it might help explain why liturgical poetry became so widespread across diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious communities in late antiquity, the origin of these poems cannot be reconstructed. They navigate complicated social tensions: they innovate, but using language and imagery that is deeply traditional; they embody the practice of piety, but in ways as entertaining as edifying; they were written for a very contemporary audience but draw on phrases of hoary antiquity. These poems, in short, have no single origin, but they shed light on the communities in which they were performed, preserved, and transmitted.

These poems must have been just as significant components of worship in Samaritan synagogues as their congeners were in Jewish and Christian congregations, and their appeal lies in their synthesis of contemporary late antique culture with deeply compelling Samaritan traditions and stories, in settings that reinforced and resonated with both elements of the poems. We see this hybridity in several ways: the poems' frequent deployment of evocative images and concepts, including access to angelic liturgies and mystical knowledge; their use of rhetorical techniques familiar to their listeners from the worlds of theater and

law; their resonance with the physicality of the liturgy, such as in their appeals to the sensory stimuli that would have surrounded the worshippers in antiquity; and their dynamic relationship with the architecture and materiality of early Samaritan synagogues.

Liturgical performance should not be separated from the larger context of rhetorical performance that surrounded the Samaritan community and formed a consensus on what constituted effective communication, regardless of setting, in late antiquity. We can examine these poems through the lens of the rhetorical handbooks (*progymnasmata*) that reflect the training of ancient orators and shed light on both public speaking and the closely aligned practices of theatrical actors (mimes and pantomime) of late antiquity. Samaritan *payyetanim* may have employed the same techniques as these other public communicators. Furthermore, an appreciation of these rhetorical techniques makes it possible to identify deeper aesthetic preoccupations shared by liturgical poems and *Tibat Marqe*—similarities that go beyond parallel motifs or theological assertions and include a common delight in *ethopoeia* (speech-in-character) and *enargeia* (vividness).

Social norms of public speech also help us to understand the role of acclamation in congregational participation. Acclamation—the practice of communal or congregational shouting or chanting in a public venue—was ubiquitous in antiquity. In the case of the Samaritans, the practice resonated with the scriptural precedent of the antiphonal chanting of blessings and curses from Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (Deut 11 and 27). In *Tibat Marqe*, we find vivid recreations of acclamatory chanting set in the biblical period and staged on the shore of the Sea of Reeds:

The great prophet Moses was singing this Song (i.e., Exod 15, the Song at the Sea), section by section. At the conclusion of each section, he would fall silent, and the elders and all Israel would say in a loud voice: “Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has cast into the sea!” (Exod 15:1).

All Israel would respond to the voice of the elders and would say in a loud voice, from the least and to the greatest, from the youngest to the eldest, in unison: “[He is] my strength and my song, and he is my salvation: this is my God and I will glorify Him, my father’s God, and I will exalt Him! YHWH is a hero in war, YHWH is His name!” (Exod 15:2–3). After this utterance, they would fall silent, until they heard the voice of the prophet Moses, who would say another section; then all the elders would respond and say in a loud voice: “Sing . . . !” and they (the Israelites) would sing. When they were done with the words of the Song, they set

out after Moses and the (divine) Glory: stars walking on the earth, the sun and the moon traveling, Moses and the Glory.⁶¹

This passage describes a complicated yet putatively spontaneous antiphonal performance, with Moses, the elders, and the community reciting their assigned lines in a particular order. The author here appears to be imagining the performance of Exod 15 as if it were a liturgical performance from his own period. His restaging of the biblical scene was plausible precisely because it projected contemporary practices back into the past.⁶²

These lenses—rhetorical and performative—help us to see both performer and audience more clearly, to articulate their roles, and to recover their own sense of the meaningfulness of the performative act. This form of analysis has already been fruitfully applied to Jewish and Christian hymns from antiquity, and in this volume it will help us to identify essential features of Samaritan poetry as well. We can hardly grasp these performative norms, however, without considering the physical setting of the hymns themselves: the concrete space of the synagogue, and the emotional space created by religious ritual.

The synagogue, not the temple, was the locus of religious ritual in Samaritan antiquity, although as in the case of their Jewish counterparts who lamented the destruction of Zion, Samaritans' memory of and longing for a temple on Mount Gerizim was of central importance.⁶³ Of the Samaritan synagogues that have been excavated, several date from roughly the same time period as the hymns examined in this volume (ca. fourth century CE) and reflect the transformation of Samaritan culture under Baba Rabba, which included the reorganization of the leadership and the transformation of the liturgy.⁶⁴ In short, the synagogues seem to complement the literary evidence with physical evidence of a transformation, or perhaps institutionalization, of Samaritan worship in the fourth

61. *TM* 2 §54 (1032–1042, p. 153), trans. MacDonald, *Memar Marqah*, 2:80 (adapted). This passage, it bears noting, is in Hebrew and likely dates from a later period than that of Marqe himself, but given the ubiquity of acclamation throughout the ancient Mediterranean world, it seems plausible that the scene described here would resonate with liturgical practices familiar to readers and was perhaps based on the performance of *piyyutim*.

62. On liturgical acclamation in the land of Israel during the period when Marqe lived, see Lieber, “With One Voice.”

63. For a history of material culture on Mount Gerizim, see Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations*.

64. Levine discusses the flurry of Samaritan synagogue construction under Baba Rabbah (including a synagogue on Mount Gerizim opposite the site of the destroyed sanctuary) and makes the following observation: “If this last suggestion [of dating the reformations of Baba Rabba to the mid third century] is accepted, then Samaritan synagogue building would constitute an interesting chronological parallel to the appearance of the mid third-century Jewish synagogues, and the two may even be related in some way” (*Ancient Synagogue*, 190–91). See also Magen, “Samaritan Synagogues.”

century. The Samaritan synagogue was an organization of sacred space strongly colored by the memory of the temple that once stood on Mount Gerizim and would, it was believed, stand again.

Samaritan synagogues in late antiquity were located both inside and outside the territory of Samaria within the Land of Israel, as well as in the Samaritan diaspora. Unlike Samaritan synagogues built in later centuries, however, the late antique structures are not consistently oriented toward Mount Gerizim, whereas Jewish synagogues of the same period are usually—although not universally—oriented toward Jerusalem.⁶⁵ Common motifs in late ancient Samaritan synagogue mosaics include the altar, the Torah shrine, and the tabernacle and related items (menorahs, incense shovels, shofars), similar to what we find in contemporary Jewish synagogues.⁶⁶ There are visual differences, however, such as the tendency (according to present evidence) for Samaritan synagogues to avoid depictions of animals and humans. It is particularly striking that, while multiple Jewish synagogue mosaics portray birds in cages, the Samaritan synagogue in Khirbet Samara contains a depiction of an empty cage.⁶⁷ While Jewish synagogues became increasingly comfortable with depictions of animals, humans, and heavenly figures in late antiquity, the consistent Samaritan aesthetic preferences militated against such visuals, perhaps reflecting a more stringent understanding of the Torah's prohibition on images.⁶⁸

In the Samaritan context, mosaic depictions of ritual items may reflect both a memory of temple ritual (expressing both nostalgia and a concern for the authenticity of religious expression) and hopes centered on the narrative of the prophetic-messianic figure known as the Taheb ("he who returns/restores"). In this, they resemble Jewish depictions of similar items that display longing for suspended religious practices and also aspirations for their restoration, as well as

65. On the challenges of distinguishing Jewish and Samaritan synagogues, see Pummer, "Samaritan Synagogues and Jewish Synagogues"; Magen, *Samaritans*, 117–80. Pummer provides an excellent summary that takes the most recent scholarship into account (*Samaritans*, 91–112).

66. Until recently, the absence of depictions of the lulav and etrog—two of the four species that are employed ritually in the Jewish observance of the Festival of Booths—were considered evidence of a synagogue's identity as Samaritan rather than Jewish. The absence of this imagery was assumed to reflect the distinct Samaritan interpretations of the Torah's commandments concerning these items. Whereas Jews symbolically wave bundles of the four species, Samaritans use palm fronds to construct the roofs of their sukkahs and decorate them with fruits. See Jacoby, "Four Species." However, this common understanding has recently come into question; see Pummer, "Synagogues," and Lieber, "Shabbat in the Garden of Eden."

67. See Magen, "Samaritan Synagogues"; Pummer, *Samaritans*, 91–112.

68. Aesthetic preferences are complicated and reflect a variety of sources, including religious values but also local norms and histories. Visuals can reflect acceptance of broader societal trends or their explicit rejection, but oversimplification in analysis must be avoided. It is, however, worth noting how Samaritan aesthetic preferences anticipate similar preferences among the Muslims who would later become the majority population in Samaria.

their enactment through artistic representation.⁶⁹ The Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim was razed by John Hyrcanus in 110 BCE, and in the aftermath of this trauma, a Samaritan version of a more widespread tradition emerged concerning the concealment of the cult vessels and implements from the wilderness period in an undisclosed and subsequently forgotten location.⁷⁰ The identity of the original concealer varies but is most commonly either Eli or Uzzi; Josephus, however, identifies him as Moses, which is at the very least a resonant association.⁷¹ According to popular Samaritan belief, the Taheb—who seems to represent a new Moses—would restore these items to use after recovering them from their hiding place. The early origin of this tradition is underscored by Josephus's reference to it in his *Antiquities*, where he describes how a man “catered to the (Samaritan) mob, rallied them, bidding them to go in a body with him to Mount Gerizim. . . . He assured them that on their arrival he would show them the sacred vessels which were buried there, where Moses had deposited them. . . . But before they could ascend, Pilate blocked their projected route up to the mountain.”⁷² The fact that Josephus identifies Moses as the one who originally concealed the implements may reflect some awareness that the eventual recoverer will be a second Moses: “the returning one” will restore the people to their shrine and the holy vessels to the people. It is a message of both hope and authenticity.

By the time of Baba Rabba's reformation (or restoration), it is likely that Samaritans were denied any kind of regular access to their sacred mountain-top. Control of Mount Gerizim constituted a flash point in relations between Samaritans and ruling powers. In the second century CE, the emperor Antoninus Pius built a temple to Jupiter on the northern ridge of Mount Gerizim, Tell er-Ras (which is not the same peak on which the Samaritan temple stood); near the end of the fifth century, the church of Mary Theotokos was constructed on the Samaritan holy site.⁷³ The national-political symbolism of the sacred

69. The Jewish synagogue in Huqoq, currently being excavated by Jodi Magness, seems to reflect a particularly messianic visual program. Of particular interest is a mosaic that depicts the beasts from Dan 7, about which Magness says, “The Daniel panel is interesting because it points to eschatological, or end of day, expectations among this congregation” (“Newly-Discovered”).

70. Anderson, “Mount Gerizim”; Hall, “From John Hyrcanus to Baba Rabbah.” On the hidden temple vessels, including parallel legends in Hellenistic and rabbinic Jewish sources, see Collins, “Hidden Vessels,” and Kalimi and Purvis, “Hiding of the Temple Vessels.” Note the New Testament passage in which a Samaritan woman speaks of a messiah who will come and “show us all things” (John 4:25), perhaps including the location of these concealed items.

71. Eli rejected the authority of Uzzi and founded a schismatic shrine at Shiloh, according to Samaritan traditions paralleling those in 1 Sam 1–4. See Kartveit, *Origins of the Samaritans*, 26–39; Pummer, *Samaritans*, 9–14.

72. Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.85–87; translation adapted from *Jewish Antiquities* (trans. Feldman), 7:61–64. Also note Bowman, “Early Samaritan Eschatology.”

73. Medieval Samaritan tradition credits the emperor Hadrian with construction of the Roman temple, but archaeological excavations indicate that Antoninus Pius was likely responsible for the

mountaintop precincts on Gerizim and Zion and the religious centrality of the image of the shrine in Samaritan and Jewish synagogues suggest a common orientation and experience shared by Samaritans and Jews in late antiquity.

Synagogue space—Jewish or Samaritan—differs from other spaces. The spatial configuration and adornment of synagogues indicate that they were built for a specific set of uses. The images used to decorate synagogues look to the past and anticipate future restoration, even as the physical structures serve to orient those within the building toward eternal sacred space. To step into a synagogue is to step into a slightly different time-stream, or perhaps it is more accurate to say that one steps out of the mundane flow of time altogether. Synagogue space is liturgical space, and synagogue time is liturgical time. As the stories of sacred tradition are brought to life through the reading of holy words in a hallowed space, the distant past becomes more proximate and the gulf between heaven and earth narrows. In some ways, the space—physical and temporal—created by liturgy and ritual exists apart from secular space and time, or rather represents a truer, more profoundly real manifestation of it. It is a creative and imaginative space, conjured by force of will and shaped by sounds, images, words, and symbols. The physical similarities between Jewish and Samaritan synagogues underline how the structures are distinguished by their respective liturgical texts and ritual practices.

Walls and words existed in a dynamic with each other. Only through the rituals that unfolded within it did the Samaritan synagogue become a sanctuary—a holy place. The presence of the Torah scroll in its niche represented the ongoing durability of revelation, the preservation of a sacred heritage; the recitation of verses extracted from the Torah (*qatafim*) gave voice to that inheritance; and the performance of *piyyutim* recreated key aspects of sacred history and experience, transforming the hoary past into intimate memory and bringing the mortal congregation into existential proximity with the heavenly hosts. All of these elements worked in concert, reinforcing and shaping each other. The *piyyutim*, for their part, respond to the sanctity of space and occasion, amplifying and even generating a sense of holiness and wonder in the moment.

Key Themes and Effects in Classical Samaritan *Piyyut*

At first glance, the body of classical Samaritan hymns may seem relatively uniform. Formally, this is certainly the case: while there are shorter works (especially the twenty-two hymns in the subset of Amram's poems known as the

first phase of Roman building on the site. See Magen, "Gerizim, Mount." On the location of the Roman temple, see Bull, "Ras, Tell er-."

Durran) and longer works (as exemplified in some of Marqe's more expansive compositions), within each poem the stanzas are of fixed length, and most works are structured as acrostics. But this structural simplicity belies significant thematic complexity and imagistic creativity within the corpus. There is rarely a simple narrative structure to the poems or a single festival setting that might shape audience expectations, and as a result the distribution of motifs and images may appear disorganized, leading casual readers to regard these works as a diffuse mix of themes and ideas. But Samaritan *piyyutim* cannot be skimmed; they are best appreciated when read slowly and closely. Patient examination discloses not only striking contrasts between Samaritan *piyyut* and Jewish poetry from late antiquity (the closest analogue to these works, particularly in the case of JPA poetry, which is written in a very similar language and likewise favors relatively simple structures⁷⁴) but also potent insights into the religious world of the Samaritan community at this pivotal time in its history.

To be sure, the common aesthetic and performative sensibility of Samaritan *piyyutim* differs from that found in contemporary Jewish and Christian liturgical poetry, where biblical and liturgical themes play a much more overt role in the composition and utilization of hymns. But close reading reveals the unique texture of each of the former, both within the corpus of the poetry and within the context of Samaritan writings. Each poet, furthermore, favors certain themes. The brief essays that introduce each poem translated in this volume highlight some of the distinctive features of each composition. The following paragraphs describe certain recurring figures, images, themes, and motifs that emerge as particularly significant throughout the whole corpus.

Each poet displays a slightly different relationship to time. Amram's poems often entwine three critical temporal moments: the creation story (often exemplified by the Sabbath), the revelation of Torah at Sinai (and the Torah itself), and the anticipated future, or "time of favor" (*rakhuta*), which is a restoration of a past idyllic time. This future age is sometimes framed in terms of the redemptive coming of the Moses-like Taheb, whose arrival will put an end to the "time of disfavor" or "turning away" (*fanuta*). Amram does not delineate when the time of disfavor began or what initiated it, but he believed that it described his present.⁷⁵ The poet's temporal focus shifts from poem to poem, and often the chronological registers of creation, revelation, and restoration collapse into

74. Lieber, "No Translation Needed."

75. According to some medieval and modern Samaritan traditions, the time of favor came to an end and the time of disfavor began when the priest Eli attempted to arrogate the high priesthood to himself and set up a schismatic temple at Shiloh (see 1 Sam 1–4 in the MT). The earliest Samaritan chronicle (the *Tulida*) offers a different account, however, and states that, in the time of the high priest Uzzi, God hid the tabernacle built by Bezalel (Exod 31:1–11); see Florentin, *Tulida*, 76. For a summary of the history and theology of this concept, see Pummer, *Samaritans*, 10–13; Dexinger, "Samaritan Eschatology," esp. 276–77; Kartveit, "Origin of the Jews and Samaritans."

each other, with the Torah encoding the story of creation and the commands of the Sabbath and its hero Moses providing the prototype of the prophet-yet-to-come, or the Sabbath providing a taste of both the idyllic lost past and the eagerly anticipated future. At times, the Sabbath can even be interchangeable with the Torah (e.g., Amram 17). In place of strong narrative structures and chronologies, the poems juxtapose images and phrases to which they return with some elliptical repetition. This way of writing helps underscore points of contact across time and space: the ancestors who experienced the exodus and the present community, Moses and the Taheb, Sinai and the current service. One consequence of this blurring of past into present is that the time of favor—otherwise a vague, dreamlike past-future so different from the present it seems inherently remote—becomes almost tangibly immanent, if only through the experience of the present Sabbath. Nothing is far off, neither the triumphs and traumas of the past nor the promised rescue of the future.

Marqe, by contrast, dwells on the present almost exclusively. The time of disfavor (Marqe 1, l. 113) and the time of favor (Marqe 5, l. 87) are each mentioned just once, and the second Moses—the Taheb—is never mentioned (with the possible exception of Marqe 21, l. 97*). Marqe's poetry instead focuses on the opportunities, experiences, and failures of his own listeners. Torah is to be studied and revered, the Sabbath is to be kept, sins are to be regretted, and mercy is to be hoped for. It is not that Marqe ignores the past or the future, but rather that he seems to find the present moment urgent and compelling. In his compositions, Ninna conjures a vivid sense of the Sabbath—linking it with creation and with revelation, to be sure—and emphasizes the cyclical nature of time. Just as this Sabbath will depart, another will come.

Ninna left us only one or two poems—perhaps three, if Marqe 18 is included—and they all address a specific liturgical moment, the conclusion of the Sabbath. This focus lends Ninna's poetry a clear orientation in time: they are firmly anchored in the present, in that specific liminal moment when sanctified time returns to the workaday world. Ninna never mentions the Taheb, or the time of favor (or disfavor). Instead, he looks to the past for comfort, strength, and inspiration—to God as Creator, and to the legacy of his ancestors—while remaining focused on the current moment, so that he may help his community savor its joys, appreciate its gifts, and continue to hope that God will remain merciful and that the covenant with God's people will endure.

God, unsurprisingly, is almost always either the subject or object of the hymns. Throughout the poems, the poets speak about God to their congregations, sharing with them insights into God's nature, history, and qualities—a rhetorical tactic that can be understood as serving to remind God, indirectly, of precisely those same things. The poems also assume that God is an attentive listener who awaits prayer and finds it moving; the poets frequently address

God directly and in intimate terms (as in Amram 2 and Marqe 4, for example). These works often speak of and to God by invoking divine attributes—qualities that the poets can assure their communities that God possesses while reminding God to express them (see, for example, Amram 22 and Marqe 11 and 12). These are frequently listed and catalogued: God is merciful, good, and loyal; powerful, mighty, and mindful. He is a God who creates and rescues, who is just and fair but also anxious to forgive, and throughout it all, deserving of praise from both humans and angels. The poems do not develop God as a “personality”; God is defined more by attributes than by actions but is consistently understood as attentive and unwaveringly present. And, as is underscored by the liturgical phrase that concludes many of these hymns and is repeated within many of their stanzas, God is radically one. Singularity is the quintessence of the divine.

While God is praised as the Creator, revealer, and rescuer, the poets also develop distinctive interpretations of creation, revelation, and redemption, and the Torah provides them with a locus where these motifs intersect. Revelation is the source of our poets’ knowledge of God’s nature and actions, the Sabbath and its laws, and the promises that constitute a future redemption modeled on the past, in the person of the Taheb, the returning Moses. The Torah also represents the link between heaven and earth, between God and God’s people, the essence of the covenant at the heart of Samaritan theology. In turn, Moses—the recipient and transmitter of scripture—constitutes an object of enduring fascination. Indeed, text and tradent are so deeply intertwined that they are, at times, indistinguishable (see, for example, Marqe 20). Yet the emphasis on Torah is striking: particularly in the works of Marqe, Torah becomes a character in its own right, and Moses is the hero of *Tibat Marqe*. Perhaps the liturgical poems underscore the importance of scripture, as revealed and received, precisely because of the fact that, as hymns, they embellish the liturgy and enrich the religious lives of the community: Torah links the people to God and to the sacred past and future. Moses, for all the mythic knowledge and power credited to him, is dead, the temple has been razed, and the Taheb has not yet come to initiate the time of favor. It is Torah that endures and is visible in the people’s midst.⁷⁶

Influenced by the aesthetics of the poetic line, which prizes parallelism and contrast, these poems make frequent use of antonymous word pairs. This rhetorical structure is not simply an aesthetic element of the compositions; the word pairs function as merisms, or markers of extremes, and gesture toward paradox: sin—forgiveness, angels—mortals, and revealed—concealed are particularly common, and suggest some of the different concerns of these poems (see, for example, Amram 17 and 25; Marqe 1, 2, and 9). Sin and forgiveness speak to the relational nature of Samaritan theology, in which people transgress but

76. See Lieber, “Scripture Personified.”

God forgives. Such is the nature of each party, and this is one key aspect of the covenantal relationship. (The similar pair “to sin” and “to repent” obviously bespeaks an internal process familiar to the individuals at prayer.) The binary of angels (קַעֲיִמִין) and mortals (מֵאֲתִין), by contrast, constitutes a merism that contains within it the entire created order, personifying the cosmos from heaven to earth; these two terms also hint at the contrast between “the living” and “the dead,” an opposition that spans “this world” and “the world to come,” to borrow rabbinic parlance. Finally, the pairing of “revealed” (גִּלְיָ) and “concealed” (כִּסְיָ) provides the poets with a way of articulating the miraculous paradox of contact between God and humanity. “Revelation” names that moment when the invisible becomes visible, when something that existed but was unknowable becomes manifest and known.

Finally, beyond those motifs and themes developed in the bodies of the hymns—the images and phrases that create a unity of texture and conceptual world across these poems—the cumulative effect of refrains and fixed phrases should also be noted. While recurring phrases, figures, and word pairs embellish individual stanzas throughout these works, refrains provide a means by which the community could participate in the performance of the hymns, internalizing them not only through passive listening but also by actively speaking some of the lines.⁷⁷ The refrain may be brief and frequently repeated, as in Marqe 16 (“Forever, let it be said!”) and Marqe 20 (“And there is no writing as great as you!”), where the refrain follows every stanza, or it may be as long as a stanza, as in Amram 5, a short hymn in which the refrain occurs only twice:

We cry out unto him in secret, “Help!”
 Perhaps he will help us?
 O God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob
 Hear our voices, O our master,
 And have mercy upon us in your mercifulness!

The refrain in Marqe 16, “Forever, let it be said,” acts as an affirmation of the stanza that it concludes—a kind of drawn-out “Amen.” The refrain in Marqe 20, “And there is no writing as great as you,” has a different rhetorical function, turning the community into a chorus of praise that speaks directly to the personified Torah. The long refrain from Amram 5, by contrast, speaks to God from an explicitly communal perspective: “*We* appeal to *your* mercifulness.” It expresses both uncertainty and hope, enacting the “crying out” that it describes and striving for confidence in the divine qualities it asserts. In its few lines, it deploys

77. On the power of refrains as a mode of participation, albeit in reference to Jewish liturgical poems, see Lieber, “Rhetoric of Participation.”

a number of key words from the corpus as a whole: the worshippers' cry is (paradoxically) "concealed," while God is a source of help and characterized by mercy. Common elements of the corpus as a whole are given voice in this refrain.

Often, the themes, ideas, and images in these poems can be cryptic or unclear in isolation; the references in *Tibat Marqe* are rarely more fulsome, in part perhaps because the richly poetic rhetoric of Marqe's exegetical work has not been recognized.⁷⁸ Fuller articulations of key concepts—the nature and function of the Taheb, the origins of the time of disfavor, doctrines of the Sabbath and Torah—can be found in later works. And yet, while those later works may be responding in some fashion to a desire to elucidate these poems, it seems likewise clear that our poets presumed communal competency in and familiarity with the terms and ideas they reference. These ideas, thus, cannot be regarded as medieval inventions, but constitute an organic component of the worldview of these classical poets.

A Note on Texts and Translations

Over a decade ago, I published an article in which I explicated a Hebrew poem from the sixth century CE composed by the Jewish *payyetan* Yannai in light of the geopolitics of his time, including the urge that Jews may have felt to join with their Samaritan compatriots in rebelling against the Christian emperors.⁷⁹ That essay was about Samaritan history, but it included no Samaritan texts or voices. Samaritan liturgical poetry was simply not yet something of which I was aware. I had some familiarity with *Tibat Marqe*, the primary "midrash" of Samaritans in late antiquity, but the body of classical Samaritan poetry was beyond my ken. It would be several more years before a passing comment from Steven Fine would nudge me toward Samaritan *piyyut*.

Hymnography itself is a young and growing field, and comparative work is essential to knitting together the various discrete textual corpora, including Jewish material (in Hebrew and Aramaic) and Christian writings (in Syriac and Greek, as well as in Latin). The body of Samaritan poetry, while smaller than either the surviving Jewish or Christian corpora, offers an important counterpoint to the other two. The Samaritan experience, entwined with the history of Jews and Christians in the land of Israel, helps to illuminate points of commonality among the diverse corpora of liturgical hymns, as well as to highlight distinctive elements of each. For example, the simple structure of many

78. For example, on the Taheb, see *TM* 1 §64 (422, p. 89) and 2 §39 (902–8, p. 139).

79. Lieber, "You Have Been Skirting."

Samaritan poems—alphabetical acrostics structuring uniform stanzas, perhaps with a refrain—is shared by the poetry of Yose ben Yose (ca. fourth century CE), but the two are easily distinguished by differences in content. Similarly, the language of the Samaritan poems is essentially the same as that of the JPA corpus, but whereas the JPA poems lack any clear sense of liturgical setting, the Samaritan poems were obviously composed for use in worship rituals. Essential to comparative study, however, has been the creation of sound critical editions of texts and, along with those resources, translations that allow scholars in diverse areas and a range of disciplines to access original source materials. This volume is a modest contribution intended to facilitate and encourage this larger scholarly conversation.

The translations in this volume are based on the texts published in Ben-Hayyim's five volumes, supplemented in some instances by the earlier work of Cowley. I have included all of the works conventionally attributed to the three classical Samaritan *payyetanim*—Amram Dare, Marqe, and Ninna—although I have indicated when the attribution is dubious or mistaken, as is the case with Marqe 18, which Ben-Hayyim notes is probably to be ascribed to Ninna. While the creation of new critical editions (along with apparatuses such as digitized manuscripts and acoustic recordings of Samaritan pronunciation traditions) remains a desideratum, the editions of Ben-Hayyim and Cowley remain the standards in the field and are quite accessible.⁸⁰

In translating these poems, I have striven to balance clarity in English with a loose fidelity to the rhythm and resonances of the Aramaic original. The stichometry typically follows that of Ben-Hayyim, at least insofar as it can be maintained without compromising the fluency of the English text. Acrostics, when present, are indicated in the margins; the reader will notice that acrostics often use the letter *'ayin* (ܘ) where one would expect an *'aleph* (ܐ), or a *heh* (ܗ) in place of a *khet* (ܟ); these substitutions are a sign of the weakening of gutturals typical of Samaritan Aramaic (and of JPA as well).⁸¹ Each hymn is preceded by the ligature indicating its traditional liturgical function. The footnotes highlight particularly challenging or ambiguous words and phrases and also serve to clarify allusions, quotations, and other subtle resonances, particularly those that are difficult to reproduce in translation. The subtlety is amplified by the fact that, in more than a few cases, the layers of translation are manifold: in some instances, the English represents an Aramaic version of a scriptural

80. The text in Ben-Hayyim, *Recitation of Prayers and Hymns [RPH]*, provides the basis for the electronic version available through *CAL*. The *CAL* website also provides access to the best edition of the SamT, courtesy of Avraham Tal.

81. On the weakening of gutturals in Aramaic in late antiquity, see Kutscher, *Studies in Galilean Aramaic*, 67–96. In Samaritan Aramaic, the gutturals ܟ, ܗ, ܐ, and ܘ are frequently heard as interchangeable; the uvular fricative ܟ (resh), however, is not subject to this confusion.

Hebrew original. Key Samaritan concepts—theological, historical, and exegetical—are also clarified in the notes. Within the poems themselves, refrains are italicized and boldface type indicates words and phrases that appear in Hebrew in the original Aramaic text. Brackets indicate English words that have been supplied to ensure a fluent translation. Ben-Hayyim's line numbering is preserved throughout; in the three poems where his text is incomplete (Marqe 15, 16, and 21), line numbers followed by asterisks are assigned to passages drawn from Cowley's edition.

The content and orientation of the annotations to these poems differ significantly from similar annotations in translations of Jewish and Christian liturgical poetry, in that the intertextual framework of these poems is distinctly Samaritan. The substantial majority of biblical allusions in these poems come from the Torah, the only text accepted as canonical by the Samaritan Israelites. Samaritan *piyyut* lacks the densely textured allusions to Psalms, Proverbs, and the Prophets that characterize Jewish and Christian hymnography. At the same time, these poems display significant independence from Samaritan texts with which we might expect them to resonate. For example, they do not often allude to the interpretative lore in *Tibat Marqe* in the way that Jewish poetry reflects the midrashic traditions alongside which it developed (even Marqe's poetry is relatively devoid of such allusions), nor do the Aramaic translations of scriptural passages always agree with the SamT, which dates to the same period. The lack of overlap between Samaritan *piyyut* and Samaritan exegesis or biblical translation suggests the independence with which these traditions emerged: Marqe's poetry is not simply his prose exegesis cast in a more rhythmic form,⁸² and translation of scripture may have remained a dynamic practice, just as it did in Palestinian Jewish synagogues. The disjunction between Samaritan *piyyut* and Samaritan midrash and targums may also, however, draw our attention to the fact that, while these literary works—liturgical, exegetical, and pedagogical—were written for and preserved within the Samaritan community, the works themselves served different functions and reflected distinctive communal and religious needs and audiences.

Each poem in this volume is prefaced by a brief analytical introduction that highlights one or two particularly compelling aspects of the poem. It may also draw attention to large-scale structural features such as refrains, to distinctive themes that texture the work as a whole, to motifs that recur across multiple works, or to singularly striking lines or images that benefit from closer attention.

82. Indeed, the poetry embedded in *TM* itself awaits further study in light of its relationship to the poems presented in this volume, as well as to the body of late antique hymnography more broadly. For some excellent preliminary observations on the rhetorical use of poetry in *TM*, see Novick, *Piyyut and Midrash*, 68–75, 187–89.

Distinctive contextual elements related to ritual, theology, and history may also be singled out if a given poem provides a way into a larger subject, whether it be messianism, the figure of Moses, or the role of the Torah. The analysis of Samaritan *piyyutim* in the commentaries will draw attention to the variety of ways in which context—historical, exegetical, theological, performative, and ritual—can deepen our awareness of the complexity of *piyyutim*. No single poem will resonate with every potential aspect of context, but each poem will illustrate at least some component of contextual richness. Out of this analytical mosaic, the complex beauty and dynamism of classical Samaritan poetry will emerge. These miniature essays are, of course, far from exhaustive, and serve primarily to gesture toward the richness of this body of literature—a collection of poems that awaits sustained scholarly attention—and the kind of insights it can provide into Samaritan religiosity and late antique cultural expression more broadly.