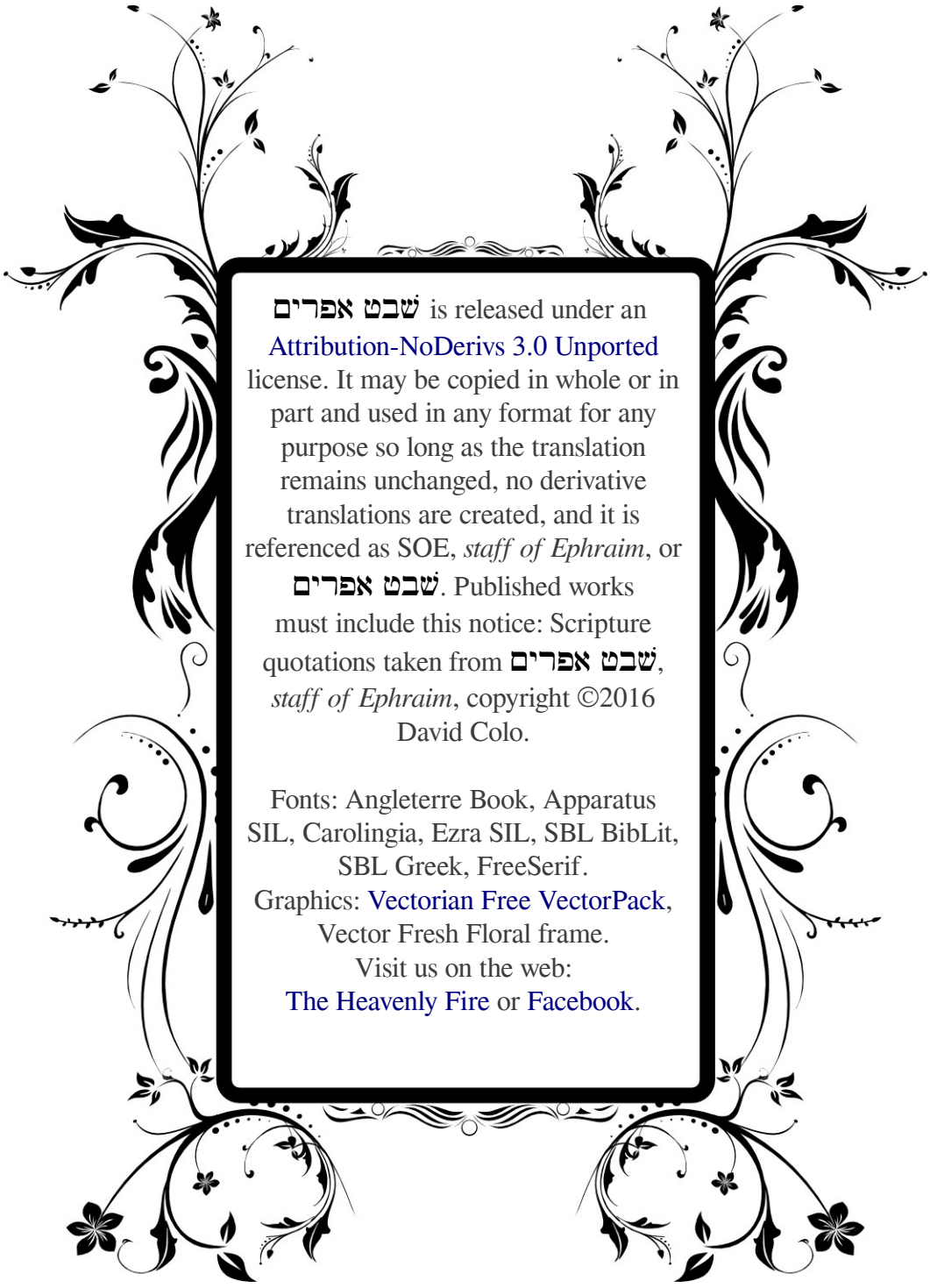


שבט אפרים
staff of Ephraim

בראשית
Genesis

David Colo

A decorative floral frame with intricate black and white scrollwork, leaves, and flowers, surrounding a central text box.

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INTRODUCTION

NAMES AND TERMINOLOGY

1. Of The Translation

שַׁבַּת אֶפְרַיִם (*šēbeṭ 'ep̄rāyim*) means “**staff of Ephraim**” (SOE). The name **Ephraim** appears throughout the prophetic texts of the Judean canon as a synonym for the northern kingdom of Israel. The tribal territory of Ephraim lay in the center of that kingdom. And in the heart of that was Shechem, situated below Mount Gerizim, on which sat a sacred Israelite temple independent of the one rebuilt in Jerusalem. The word **staff** is often used metonymically to describe the ruling power of a king or tribe. Thus, the name for this translation reflects the belief of those who would base their religion on Gerizim that their texts are the divine rule for the tribes of Jacob and a witness to their ancestral heritage.

2. Of The Sacred Text

Before Alexander conquered Palestine, the **Samaritans** (or שַׁמְרִיִּים, meaning “**Observant Ones**” or “**Guardians [of the Law]**”ⁱ) were an Israelite sect that lived, worshiped, and offered sacrifices in northern Israel apart from the Jews of Judea. Like many groups in the Second Temple Period, they considered themselves the “true Israel.” Unlike other groups, they see themselves as descendants of those left behind by the Assyrian campaigns of invasion and deportation; sons and daughters of those who remained in the land while the people of Judah were exiled to Babylon. In fact, they believe that the Jews broke away from them at the time of the priest Eli to establish an illegitimate sanctuary and priesthood at Shiloh. For almost two-thousand years, the Samaritans have safeguarded and transmitted a form of the Mosaic Law that differs from the **Masoretic Text (MT)**, which are the texts that became the canon of Pharasaic-Rabbinic Judaism. Though they had numerous religious traditions, they considered the five scrolls of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) as the primary source of divine authority. One of the names for that body of texts is **Pentateuch**. Thus, the Law passed on by those communities, which is the basis for this translation, is called the **Samaritan Pentateuch (SP)**.

THE SAMARITAN PENTATEUCH

1. Background

The Samaritan Pentateuch is based on versions of biblical texts used by ancient Israelites that were eventually abandoned by all but Samaritans. Such texts are often called “**proto-Samaritan**” because they agree in character and/or content with texts in SP (with the exception of some late changes). Proto-Samaritan texts were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (most noteworthy, 4QpaleoExodus^m and 4QNum^b), have readings that coincide with the Greek **Septuagint (LXX)**, and share passages with pseudepigraphal works like Jubilees. Unique readings in SP are also found in New Testament texts.

ⁱ The name “Samaritans” is often confused with “Samaritians.” Such confusion arises from a long-standing, but unsupported assumption that the שַׁמְרִיִּים in 2 Kgs 17 refers particularly and exclusively to the Samaritan sect (as opposed to the people of Samaria). The name used by Samaritans both past and present is שַׁמְרִיִּים (*Shomerim*).

Stephen's sermon in Acts 7 contains a quotation from and several words originating in the texts of SP. There is no doubt that SP is based on old MSS considered authoritative by Second Temple Jews even though the texts in MT are largely older. Two of the primary characteristics of proto-Samaritan texts are:

- (A) Widespread harmonization or “clarification” of passages.
 - Taking descriptions from one place and repeating them later where there was no verbatim duplication.
 - Taking similar regulations or statements from different scrolls and placing them next to each other in the same scroll.
- (B) Ubiquitous grammatical and syntactic “corrections.”
 - Modernizing rare or archaic features.
 - Replacing difficult constructions with more typical ones.
 - Changing gender, number, or verbal forms to better sync with other parts of a sentence.

SP shares these features. Three primary differences set it apart:

- (C) Another commandment in the Decalogue.
 - Ten commandments are hard to find in MT. Jews have, historically, interpreted the statement “I, YHWH, [am] your god...” as the First Commandment. SP, however, has another commandment locating YHWH's temple on Mount Gerizim. Thus, their First Commandment is “There must not be for you [any] other gods...”.
- (D) The “choice” of a central place of worship *in the past*.
 - Throughout Deuteronomy, reference is made to the place that YHWH “will choose” (בַּחַר) for his dwelling. In these places, SP has the perfect form “has chosen” (בָּחַר).
- (E) YHWH is more transcendent.
 - According to Masoretic tradition, ancient scribes emended the text in various places to protect YHWH's reverence (or Moses'). One example is the shifting of word order from “YHWH stood before Abraham” to “Abraham stood before YHWH” in Gen 18:22. SP continues that scribal tradition. Where YHWH deals directly with humans in MT, SP has “YHWH's messenger” doing so (as in Num 22:20). Anthropomorphic statements about YHWH are more often emended in SP (such as “YHWH [is] a warrior in battle” in Exod 15:3 instead of MT's “YHWH [is] a man of war”). An example in the direction of Moses occurs in Deut 34:10, where MT says “Never since has a prophet arisen in Israel like Moses,” whereas SP says, “Never again will a prophet in Israel like Moses arise.”

For more on SP, see Robert T. Anderson and Terry Giles' *The Samaritan Pentateuch: An Introduction to Its Origins, History, and Significance for Biblical Studies*. Resources for Biblical Study #72. Atlanta: Society for Biblical Literature, 2012.

2. Importance

Interest in SP has fluctuated throughout the centuries. When it was first discovered by the West, Catholic churches realized that many readings in SP supported their bibles. To combat Protestantism's dismissal of the Vulgate and LXX, they propped up SP as proof of the superiority of their Greek and Latin texts (and so of their churches). SP gained notoriety not for what it was, but for how it could be

used polemically. Later on, as Protestantism gave birth to the field of biblical scholarship, bias for the Judaic canon caused Protestants to view SP with suspicion, if not disregard. Many prominent scholars declared it worthless for textual reconstruction. Even those who dedicated their research to SP viewed it as inferior to MT and, like those before them, valued SP not for its own sake, but for how it could be used to support their own interests. It was the lone voices crying in the wilderness that prepared the way for a reappraisal of SP. When the Dead Sea Scrolls were found, which antedated SP, many contained readings shared by SP against MT, LXX, or both. Here is one example:

והיה בעברכם את הירדן
תקימו את־האבנים האלה
אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם היום
בהר עיבל
ושדת אותם בשיד
ובנית שם מזבח
ליהוה אלהיך

Then, when you cross the Jordan,
you must erect those stones—
as I, myself, ordered you today—
on Mount Ebal.
You must plaster them with plaster
and construct an altar there
to your god YHWH.
—Deut 27:4-5b, MT

והיה בעברכם את הירדן
תקימו את־האבנים האלה
אשר אנכי מצוה אתכם היום
בהרגרזים
ושדת אותם בשיד
ובנית שם מזבח
ליהוה אלהיך

Then, when you cross the Jordan,
you must erect those stones—
as I, myself, ordered you today—
on Mount Gerizim.
You must plaster them with plaster
and construct an altar there
to your god YHWH.
—Deut 27:4-5b, DSS fragmentⁱⁱ

As seen above, the only difference between the two is the mention of Ebal or Gerizim. That shift is not accidental. The question is which way the shift occurred. Scholars had long surmised that since SP says “Gerizim,” it was due to Samaritan alteration (ie., the reading of MT and LXX was original). Few asked whether that made sense contextually. Since this fragment was preserved in the Judean desert by Jews before SP was codified by the Samaritans, “Gerizim” cannot be a Samaritan alteration. And since Gerizim is twice described as the mountain of blessing in contradistinction to Mount Ebal, the mountain of cursing (Deut 11:29; 27:11), and it was on Gerizim, not Ebal, that Abraham and Jacob built altars, the reading of SP is probably authentic. What the fragment from the Dead Sea shows is that Samaritans and Jews shared the same scriptural texts before individual canons were formed in the late first and early second centuries AD and that when there are differences between SP and MT, SP may represent the original text. Consequently, SP remains a textual witness with which to be reckoned.

3. Language & Script

The type of Hebrew preserved in SP lies somewhere between the sectarian Hebrew used at

ii The dark portions represent what (legibly) remains of the text. The light portions are inserted from MT. For more on this fragment, see James H. Charlesworth's “What is a Variant? Announcing a Dead Sea Scrolls Fragment of Deuteronomy.” *Maarav* 16.2 (2009): 201-12.

Qumran and Rabbinic Hebrew—in other words, a relatively late form of the Hebrew language. It is characterized by, among other things, a lack of distinction between consonants like ך and ך, the weakening, if not disappearance, of gutturals, avoidance of *waw*-consecutive and infinitive absolute forms, and a preference for *plene* spelling. Generally speaking, the Hebrew of SP evinces an updating of the text toward what was common in later Hebrew. At the same time, however, some archaic features are retained—such as the use of אֲנִי instead of אָנִי. And whereas the people of Judah slowly abandoned the Old Hebrew (sometimes called “Paelo-Hebrew”) script for the Aramaic (sometimes called “square”) script, Samaritans continued to write in Old Hebrew characters. Over time, the script became highly stylized. Though the dating of Samaritan texts paleographically is still in its infancy, changes in script show a clear separation in time between proto-Samaritan texts and SP. For more on Samaritan Hebrew, see Angel Sáenz-Badillos' *A History of the Hebrew Language*. Cambridge: University Press, 1996.

THE TRANSLATION

1. Revision

SOE is a revision of **THF** (*the heavenly fire*), for which extensive work has already been done. That work is not reproduced here. For discussion of format, methodological and literary analysis, as well as translational and interpretational rationale, see THF. Since, however, THF is based on MT instead of SP, there are differences, both large and small, between them. The differences that make SP unique are of primary interest herein. They are the subject of our **Translation Notes** and the guide from which our English rendering departs from the slopes of Zion to climb the heights of Gerizim.

2. Source Texts

The eclectic text reconstructed by August Freiherr von Gall (*Der Hebräische Pentateuch der Samaritaner*), which represents no actual MS and betrays tremendous bias for MT, is not used by SOE. Instead, we use the **della Valle codex** (circa AD 1345) from Damascus, which was published by Blayney in *Pentateuchus Hebraeo-Samaritanus*, used in both the Paris and London Polyglots, and is provided in square script in Kennicott (*Vetus Testamentum Hebraicum, cum Variis Lectionibus*), **MS 6C** from the Samaritan synagogue in Shechem—one of the earliest and most complete SPs (circa AD 1204), which was published by Shoulson (*The Torah: Jewish and Samaritan versions compared*), and the sacrosanct **Abisha Scroll** as transcribed by Perez Castro (*Séfer Abiša': Edición del Fragmento Antiguo del Rollo Sagrado del Pentateuco Hebreo Samaritano de Nablus; Estudio, Transcripción, Aparato Crítico y Facsímiles*). The text is then compared against Tsedaka (*The Israelite Samaritan Version of the Torah*), which draws from four MSS—two in the synagogue on Mount Gerizim (AD 1199 and 1210).

3. The Abisha Scroll

Among Samaritans, no copy of the Pentateuch is more revered than the Abisha Scroll, which claims to have been written by the great-grandson of Moses' brother, Aaron (though that is difficult to verify since the scribal acrostic has been badly damaged and remains cryptic). Such sacred status, combined with the scroll's extremely fragile and deteriorated nature, have historically placed it beyond the reach of both scholar and layman. Only once or twice a year is it brought out in public—yet even then it is

only carried around in its case. Those who spend years among the Samaritans hoping to study the scroll have been rebuffed or shown a different one in place of it. In the mid-1900s, however, when facing financial crises, the Samaritan community allowed the scroll to be photographed. As it turns out, the scroll is actually a patchwork of newer and older scrolls and scroll fragments, with many missing and damaged pieces, written and rewritten by numerous hands in a late form of script. The scroll as it exists today is best described as a late Medieval composition. Regardless, however, of its origin, history, or makeup, the scroll retains its sanctity. Therefore, we give it fair consideration herein. References to אָא^א in translation notes are based on the photographic plates and transcription provided by Castro (Num 35:1-Deut 34:12). For more on the Abisha Scroll, see Alan D. Crown's "The Abisha Scroll of the Samaritans." *Bulletin of John Ryland's Library* 58.1 (1975-76): 36-65.

Sigla and Abbreviations

ⲚⲚ	Samaritan Pentateuch
Ⲯ	Septuagint: Old Greek
ⲙ ^C	Masoretic Text: Cairo Codex of the Pentateuch
ⲙ ^L	Masoretic Text: Leningrad Codex
Ⲥ	Syriac Peshitta
ⲧ ^O	Targum: Onkelos
ⲧ ^N	Targum: Neofiti
ⲉ	Vulgate (Stuttgart)

Message

Historical Stuff

Form and Genre

The Primeval History

Chapter 1

8

- ¹ At first,
Elohim brought
the sky and the earth into being.
- ² Though the earth was helter-skelter
and darkness over the surface of the deep,
yet Elohim's spirit was circling
over the surface of the water.
- ³ Then Elohim said,
“Let light appear!”
So light appeared.
- ⁴ And he saw the light—
how wonderful [it was].
Elohim separated
the light and the darkness.
- ⁵ Elohim named the light “day,”
and the darkness, he named “night.”
So came evening.
So came morning.
Day one.
- ⁶ Then Elohim said,
“Let a vault appear amidst the water.
Let it keep separate
[some] water from others.”
- ⁷ Elohim made the vault
and separated the water
from the depth of the vault
and the water
from the height of the vault.
It was so.
- ⁸ Elohim named the vault “sky.”
So came evening.
So came morning.
Day two.
- ⁹ Then Elohim said, “Let the waters amass
from the depth of the sky to one place
so dry ground may appear.”
It was so.
- ¹⁰ Elohim named the dry ground “earth”
and the watery mass, he named “ocean.”

- Elohim saw how wonderful [it was].
- ¹¹ Then Elohim said,
“Let the earth produce—
the plant sowing seed,
and fruit-tree making fruit of its kind,
wherein it has seed—
on the earth.”
It was so.
- ¹² The earth brought forth produce—
the plant sowing seed of its kind,
and tree making fruit,
wherein it has seed of its kind.
Elohim saw how wonderful [it was].
- ¹³ So came evening.
So came morning.
Day three.
- ¹⁴ Then Elohim said,
“Let there be luminaries in the sky-vault
to illumine the earth
and to separate the day and the night.
Let them serve as signs of sacred times,
and for days and years.
- ¹⁵ Let them serve as luminaries
in the sky-vault
to illumine the earth.”
It was so.
- ¹⁶ Elohim made the two primary luminaries—
the greater luminary
for the dominion of day
and the lesser luminary
for the dominion of night—
as well as the stars.
- ¹⁷ Elohim placed them in the sky-vault
to illumine the earth,
¹⁸ to dominate the day and the night,
and to separate the light and the dark.
Elohim saw how wonderful [it was].
- ¹⁹ So came evening.
So came morning.
Day four.
- ²⁰ Then Elohim said,

“Let the waters swarm
 [with] the swarmer [and] living creature,
 and the flier fly about over the earth
 along the surface of the sky-vault.”
²¹ Elohim brought into being
 the giant sea creatures
 and every living creature that swims—
 [with] which the waters swarm—
 of their kind,
 and every bird of wing,
 of its kind.
 Elohim saw how wonderful [it was].
²² Elohim blessed them, saying,
 “Be fertile and proliferate
 and fill the water in the ocean,
 as the flier proliferates in the earth.”
²³ So came evening.
 So came morning.
 Day five.

²⁴ Then Elohim said,
 “Let the earth bring forth
 [every] living creature, of its kind—
 the quadruped and the crawler
 and the earthly creature, of its kind.”
 It was so.

²⁵ So Elohim made
 [every] earthly creature, of its kind—
 both the quadruped, of its kind,
 and every ground-crawler, of its kind.
 Elohim saw how wonderful [it was].

²⁶ Then Elohim said,
 “Let us make humanity with our image,
 and after our likeness,
 so they may rule the fish of the sea,
 and the bird of the sky,
 and the quadruped, and the whole earth,
 and every crawler
 that crawls on the earth.”

²⁷ Elohim brought humanity into being
 with his image.
 With Elohim's image,
 he brought it into being.

Male and female,
 he brought them into being.
²⁸ Elohim blessed them.
 Elohim said to them,
 “Be fertile and proliferate
 and fill the earth and subjugate it.
 Rule the fish of the sea,
 and the birds of the sky,
 and every [one of] the living [things]
 that crawls on the earth.”
²⁹ (Elohim said, “Look, I [hereby] give you all
 the seed-sowing produce that [is] over the whole
 earth's surface, and every seed-sowing tree that has
 fruit on it. Yours is it for food. ³⁰ And to every
 earthly creature, and to every bird of the sky, and
 to every [thing] that crawls on the earth—whatever
 has the breath of life, [I hereby give] all green
 produce for food.”)
 It was so.

³¹ Elohim saw all that he had done,
 and, yes, extremely wonderful [it was]!
 So came evening.
 So came morning.
 The sixth day.

Chapter 2	ב
Chapter 3	ג
Chapter 4	ד
Chapter 5	ה
Chapter 6	ו
Chapter 7	ז
Chapter 8	ח
Chapter 9	ט

Chapter 10 י

Chapter 11 יא

TRANSLATION NOTES



- 1:11 **and fruit-tree** — $\omega\omega$ has *waw* (and) before “fruit-tree.” This is supported by \mathfrak{S} , \mathfrak{V} , and \mathfrak{S} . Almost all the other Hebrew witnesses, however, don't have it: \mathfrak{M}^L , \mathfrak{M}^C , \mathfrak{T}^O , \mathfrak{T}^N , and 4QGen^b.
- 1:14 **to illumine the earth** — Literally, “to bring light over the earth” (להאיר על הארץ). This is supported by 4QGen^g and \mathfrak{S} . It is absent, however, from 4QGen^b, 4QGen^k, \mathfrak{M}^L , \mathfrak{M}^C , \mathfrak{T}^O , \mathfrak{T}^N , \mathfrak{V} , and \mathfrak{S} .
- and to separate** — $\omega\omega$ has *waw* (and) before “to separate.” That is supported by \mathfrak{S} .
- 1:22 **as the flier proliferates** — The verb form is imperfect. This is supported by 4QGen^g. That, combined with a fronting of the subject, indicates a circumstantial clause: “as X proliferates.” \mathfrak{M}^L , however, which is supported by 4QGen^b, has the jussive form, meaning “let X proliferate.”
- 1:26 **and after** — $\omega\omega$ has *waw* (and) before “after.” That is supported by \mathfrak{S} .
- 1:28 **every [one of] the living [things]** — $\omega\omega$ has a definite article that is not present in \mathfrak{M}^L . The use of a definite article turns כל from collective (every) to distributive (every one of).
- 1:29 **every seed-sowing tree** — \mathfrak{M}^L has a definite article that is not present in $\omega\omega$. The lack of a definite article gives כל a collective sense (every) instead of distributive sense (every single).
- 1:30 **that crawls** — $\omega\omega$ has a definite article that is not present in \mathfrak{M}^L . We represent that with a demonstrative particle (that).