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ON THE COVER: A12066. Folio from a Mamluk Qur'an given as *waqf* by Sultan Faraj ibn Barquq (1399-1412 CE).

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MISSING PAGES

TWO MANUSCRIPTS OF THE SAMARITAN TORAH IN THE ORIENTAL INSTITUTE

by Joseph Cross



WHO ARE THE SAMARITANS?

Today, in a village named Kiryat Luza in the foothills of Mount Gerizim, just outside the town of Nablus in the West Bank, there lives a community of over eight hundred people whose sacred scripture is the Torah of Moses, but who are not Jewish. They are Samaritans, the same people who many today associate solely with Jesus's parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–29) or the Samaritan woman in the Gospel According to John (John 4), but who are in fact an extant community descended from an ancient people who worshiped Yahweh. The Samaritans are not heirs to the biblical traditions associated with David, Jerusalem, the Exile, and the Return, all of which find expression in the scriptures of the Prophets and the Writings in the Jewish Bible. In fact, unlike Jews, the Samaritans believe that the Torah alone—which ends on the verge of the Israelites entering the promised land of Canaan—is scripture.

Samaria is the name of a northern region in the ancient kingdom of Israel (mid-tenth century–720 BCE), north of the kingdom of Judah (which ended in 586 BCE) and its capital Jerusalem. Historians believe that the modern Samaritans are descended from the people who continued to inhabit this land after the destruction of Israel by the Neo-Assyrians, remaining there after the destruction of Judah in 586 and the exile of Judeans to Babylon. During the last centuries of the Common Era, Samaritans coexisted with Judeans, and we might call Samaritanism an early Jewish sect. But a definitive divide occurred as Judeans emphasized the line of David and the sacredness of Jerusalem, bolstered by returning Judean exiles from Babylon during the early Achaemenid Persian period as well as the nationalist period of independence under the Hasmonean dynasty (140–116 BCE). Samaritans' communal worship of Yahweh at Mount Gerizim only, which they claim was ordained for this purpose by Yahweh, was the primary factor that distinguished them from Jews.



Two pages from a trilingual codex of the Samaritan Torah, containing Genesis 3:23–5:23 (OIM A6957), ca. 1300 CE. On each page, the columns contain (from right to left) the base Hebrew text, an Aramaic Targum, and an Arabic translation of the Torah. All three employ the Samaritan Hebrew script.

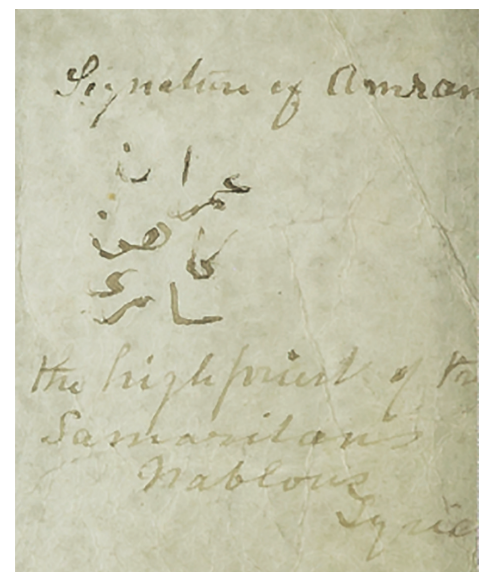
Though their number is small today, during late antiquity there were at least a million Samaritans in the Byzantine period, but persecutions under the Byzantine emperor Zeno (425–491 CE), and Samaritan rebellions in response, greatly decimated their number. By the Middle Ages and the spread of Islam, a Samaritan diaspora beyond Palestine is evident in historical sources, with communities attested in Damascus, Cairo, Iran, Greece, and elsewhere. During the Ottoman period, faced with persecution and forced conversion, many Samaritans returned to their ancestral home of Nablus. At its lowest ebb, during the Late Ottoman and British Mandate period, there were fewer than two hundred Samaritans alive.

The Torah is the name for the ancient Hebrew books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy found at the beginning of the Jewish and Christian Bibles, and these also make up the entirety of the Samaritan scriptures. It is the normative scripture for both Jews and Samaritans, though Jews additionally treat as scripture the remaining books known in the Hebrew Bible. Also called the Pentateuch (a Greek word meaning “five-part scroll”), these five books are a historical record that narrates the origins of ancient Israel, stretching from the creation of the world to the verge of the Israelites entering the land of Canaan, or Palestine. The majority of the Torah consists of a record of religious and social laws that are included within this narrative framework as instructions dictated to Moses by Yahweh. Though presented as a reasonably coherent whole, the Torah is believed by most scholars to be a complex editorial creation based on previously existing narrative and legal literature, though the shape of the original compositions and the amount of supplementation or newly written material added by editors is hotly debated. The Torah in the form that we know it from later Jewish and Samaritan manuscripts can be found among the Dead Sea Scrolls (as early as the second century BCE) and was probably compiled several centuries before that. The word “Torah” is a Hebrew word that originally meant “teaching,” used this way in the Torah itself to describe individual laws (e.g., in Leviticus 6:7 or Numbers 6:21). Some passages, such as Deuteronomy 4:44, use it to refer to the entire collection of laws given to Moses. This eventually led to the word being applied to the literary record of the Mosaic law, a usage that may be seen as early as the book of Ezra in the Hebrew Bible (see 3:2 and 7:6). In both Jewish and Samaritan synagogues, a scroll containing the entire Torah is kept in a shrine and read during religious ceremonies.



ABOVE The Samaritan High Priest Jacob ben Aaron, holding the Torah scroll of the Samaritan synagogue in Nablus (photographed in 1905).

RIGHT The signature of ‘Amrām ben Salāmah (1857–1874), high priest of the Samaritan community of Nablus, on the right margin of OIM A9a. ‘Amrām may have been repairing the original codex from which A9 was taken. It is annotated: “Signature of Amram, the high priest of the Samaritans, Nablus, Syria [sic].”



WHAT IS THE SAMARITAN TORAH?

Studying the sole scripture of the Samaritans is important not only for understanding and preserving this unique culture, but also for researching the origins of the Hebrew Bible. We are fortunate to have in the Oriental Institute fragments of two manuscripts dating from the Middle Ages. Though their existence is known, neither has been published, discussed in any detail, or even carefully examined until now. Both are loose pages from codices—the technical term for a book (as opposed to a scroll)—a technology invented in the first centuries of the Common Era and used throughout the Middle East and Africa by the Islamic era. Unlike a Torah scroll, which would have been kept by Samaritans in synagogues and used in worship (and, as in Jewish synagogues today, still are), a codex was an everyday copy of the scriptures used for education and edification. The first, OIM A6957, contains portions of Genesis 3:23–5:23, and the second, OIM A9, contains Leviticus 9:22–10:18 and 11:26–12:5. The oldest copies of the Samaritan Torah date from the eleventh or twelfth to fifteenth centuries CE, and the two Chicago manuscripts can be dated to the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries. Though this may seem shockingly late, it should be remembered that the oldest complete Hebrew Bibles date from only slightly earlier than that. Scribes continued to produce copies for sale to Europeans—especially in the form of scrolls—through the early twentieth century, one of which the Oriental Institute possesses (OIM A25414). These are not useful for studying the ancient history of the Torah itself, though they are still important artifacts of modern Samaritanism.

The Samaritan Torah was discovered in the seventeenth century by scholars in Europe who soon realized that it departed in significant ways from the received Hebrew text of the Torah and other Jewish scriptures. The received text is called the Masoretic Text, after the school of the Masoretes who, from the sixth through the tenth centuries CE, created the standard text of Rabbinic Judaism. They worked in Palestine and Iraq, producing highly accurate copies with enormous consistency, encouraging the common opinion that the Hebrew text contained therein accurately reflected the oldest, now lost copies of the scriptures. When other biblical traditions, such as the ancient Greek translation called the Septuagint, departed from what was found in the Masoretic Text, the difference was ascribed to scribal error or corruption, or explained as representing an alternate, popular edition of the text, depending on one's confessional perspective. The arrival of the Samaritan Torah in Western libraries challenged traditional conceptions.

Though the Samaritan and Masoretic texts of the Torah are largely the same, local differences abound. First of all, while the oldest copies of the Masoretic Text already appear fully vocalized, until relatively recently Samaritan Torahs have utilized consonants only, showing the reliability of their oral reading tradition. Compare OIM A11245, a Masoretic manuscript with numerous diacritical markings (called *niqqud*) above and below the consonants. Many others can be ascribed to dialectical differences in the Hebrew: the Samaritan Torah at times represents a more evolved state of the language, closer to the Hebrew of the Mishnah than the Hebrew seen in the Masoretic Text (see next page). At times, the Samaritan Torah appears to harmonize similar phrases. For example, the Samaritan Genesis 18:29 has “I will not destroy” instead of the Masoretic “I will not do it,” drawing on language found in verses 28, 31, and 32. It should be noted, however, that for many differences like this it is equally possible that the Masoretic Text is as secondary as the Samaritan. Finally, the most widely cited differences involve what appear to be deliberate changes or additions made in support of Samaritan religious practice and theology. The most famous example is the tenth commandment (Exodus 20:17), which in the Samaritan version is a fascinating pastiche of other passages of the Torah, replacing the version known in the Masoretic Text (and thus by all Jewish and Christian readers of the Bible) with a command that emphatically mandates the worship of Yahweh on Mount Gerizim, the *sine qua non* of Samaritanism.

Many significant differences in the Samaritan Torah, however, cannot be ascribed to what scholars call “sectarian” changes like this. At times, the Samaritan resembles the ancient Greek translations of the scriptures more than the Masoretic Text, suggesting to some that Hebrew versions in circulation in the final centuries BCE that were translated into Greek were different from, yet also perhaps just as original as, the Masoretic Text. While this ignited a fierce debate between Catholics and Protestants, who had differing assessments of the worth of the Greek scriptures, some nineteenth-century

“THE SAMARITANS ARE NOT HEIRS TO THE BIBLICAL TRADITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH DAVID, JERUSALEM, THE EXILE, AND THE RETURN, ALL OF WHICH FIND EXPRESSION IN THE SCRIPTURES OF THE PROPHETS AND THE WRITINGS IN THE JEWISH BIBLE. . . . THE SAMARITANS BELIEVE THAT THE TORAH ALONE—WHICH ENDS ON THE VERGE OF THE ISRAELITES ENTERING THE PROMISED LAND OF CANAAN—IS SCRIPTURE.”

scholars began to argue that the Samaritan Torah disguises, beneath a fair number of small, sectarian changes, an authentic, early witness to the biblical text.

This view was given sensational confirmation with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the earliest surviving Hebrew versions of the Torah, dating as early as the second century BCE. Incredibly, a copy of Exodus found in Cave 4 near Qumran (known as 4QpaleoExodus) showed close affinities with not the Masoretic Text of Exodus, but the Samaritan. It can now be held that the Samaritan Torah is based on an edition of the Torah that enjoyed some degree of circulation throughout the Levant in the final centuries before the Common Era, alongside other copies that developed into traditions we know from the Masoretic Text as well as the Greek Bible. As the community grew ever dissociated from other Jewish sects, especially from what became Rabbinic Judaism (the custodians of the Masoretic Text), the changes that we can identify as a “vener” of later additions, in the words of the scholar Emmanuel Tov, began to appear, and the Samaritan Torah by the Islamic period took on the consistent shape we can see from the earliest surviving manuscripts.

COMPARING THE SAMARITAN & MASORETIC TEXT OF THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

While many important differences found in the Samaritan Torah (ST) compared to the Masoretic Text (MT) reach back to ancient literary variants among copies of the Torah, a number of unique Samaritan readings are deliberate changes reflecting the Samaritan religious worldview. The most famous example is the Tenth Commandment in Exodus 20, which in the Samaritan version is a fascinating pastiche of passages taken from Deuteronomy, creating a rewritten commandment that emphatically mandates the worship of Yahweh on Mount Gerizim. Differences or additions to the MT source in the SP are in bold.

MT of Exodus 20:17

You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, his male or female slave, his ox or his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

MT of Deuteronomy 11:29

When YHWH your God brings you into the land of the Canaanites, which you are about to enter and occupy, you shall set

the blessing on Mount Gerizim.

SP of Exodus 20:17

You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, **his field**, his male or his female slave, his ox or his donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

When YHWH your God brings you into the land of the Canaanites, which you are about to enter and occupy, you shall set up large stones and cover them with plaster. You shall write on **the stones** all the words of this teaching. When you have crossed the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, about which I am commanding you today, on Mount Gerizim.

MT of Deuteronomy 27:2-4

set up large stones and cover them with plaster. You shall write on them all the words of this teaching. . . . When you have crossed the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, about which I am commanding you today, on Mount Ebal.

OIM A9: THREE LOOSE PAGES OF LEVITICUS FROM A TORAH CODEX

OIM A9 consists of three loose, non-sequential pages from a Torah codex, all from Leviticus, designated A9a, b, and c. They measure approximately 9.8 × 7.4 inches, and they are inscribed on both sides, with significant damage and missing portions that occasionally render them unreadable. They were purchased in May of 1869 in Nablus by Edward Cushing Mitchell (1829–1900), an American biblical scholar and Baptist minister who was a professor of Hebrew Bible at the Baptist Union Theological Seminary in the 1870s, the institution that in 1872 became the University of Chicago Divinity School. Mitchell's widow donated the manuscript to the Haskell Oriental Museum a year after his death in 1901, along with a scroll of the book of Esther (OIM A10) and a pen case that purportedly belonged to a Samaritan high priest (OIM A74). The manuscript can be dated approximately to the fourteenth century based on the shape of its script. The pages—as was typical of Samaritan codices until the modern period, which use paper, are made of animal skin—likely originating from a ritual sacrifice; unlike Jews, Samaritans even today practice animal sacrifice in accordance with the legislation of the Torah, during Passover.

How exactly Mitchell acquired this manuscript is yet unknown, though a clue can be found in the margin of A9a, which bears the signature, in Arabic, of 'Amrām ben Salāmah (1857–74), the Samaritan high priest when Mitchell visited Palestine. 'Amrām, known for warmly receiving visitors from the West (he once hosted the author Mark Twain), was the librarian of the Nablus synagogue and frequently repaired and restored old manuscripts, and so it is unsurprising that OIM A9a bears his signature. The manuscript's imperfect state of preservation suggests that it was taken from a genizah, a storeroom usually attached to a synagogue that is used as a receptacle for manuscripts considered sacred in a sense that precludes their destruction but that have fallen into disuse or are no longer needed. A further clue for this is the nonsequential nature of the pages, covering Leviticus 9:22–10:18 and 11:26–12:5. They clearly stem from the same original codex, but one is damaged enough to require repair to be used profitably. A scribe would have removed the damaged pages and replaced them with newly inscribed ones. A9 resembles other fragments of Torah codices known to have come from a genizah, most famously the nearly three thousand individual folios held by the National Library of Russia in St. Petersburg, collected in the nineteenth century by Abraham Firkovitch, said to have ransacked the genizas of Nablus. Many of these that (like A9) include just a handful of pages from a Torah codex have been digitized by the National Library of Israel and are accessible through their online catalog (web.nli.org.il) and are readily compared to the Chicago manuscript. It is plausible, then, that A9 was taken from a genizah and sold to Mitchell by 'Amrām, who signed the manuscript to witness that the pages were licitly obtained, not purloined. Or might these have been from a codex 'Amrām was in the process of restoring, a handful of loose pages to be replaced and that were thus genizah-bound? In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the sale of partial or entire manuscripts by Samaritan priests was an important source of revenue for the dwindling community. A soon-to-be-disposed part of a Bible made a handy item of sale.

Taking a look at the manuscript itself, the script is noticeably different from what one sees on medieval manuscripts of the Jewish Bible, as well as in modern-day printed editions. The “square” Hebrew script used in the Masoretic texts of Rabbinic Judaism evolved from an Aramaic script, adopted by Judeans in the Late Iron Age and early Persian period. At that time, Aramaic was the *lingua franca* of the Near East and Egypt. Already during the era of the Dead Sea Scrolls (second century BCE to first century CE), the Aramaic-influenced Judean script began to resemble the medieval square script found in the Masoretic tradition and elsewhere. An early version of this script can be seen on OIM A30303, the Oriental Institute's Dead Sea Scroll fragment.

The Samaritan script represents its own trajectory: it is a direct descendant of what we can call the paleo-Hebrew script, originally used by scribes writing in Hebrew in the Iron Age. It is tempting to view this as a conscious dissociation, though Judean inscriptions from the Second Temple period and certain Dead Sea Scrolls show that there were groups of Judeans who continued to use the older script alongside or even in place of the Aramaic. Nevertheless, hostile acts such as the destruction of the Samaritan temple at Mount Gerizim by the Judean king John Hyrcanus in 128 BCE would have made the Judean script much less desirable to Samaritans, to say the least. By the medieval period, from when the earliest Samaritan manuscripts survive, the Samaritan script appears in the standardized shape seen in OIM A9, found in all Hebrew-language Samaritan manuscripts from the time of the Mamluks through the Ottoman period and down to the present day.

The layout of the text differs as well from what is seen on the page of a Bible in the Masoretic tradition, and indeed from what we would expect from a book meant for ease of reading. The text is presented in mostly *scripta continua*, that is, a running series of letters without spaces between words. To aid reading, words are separated with small dots, sentences separated with two dots resembling a colon, and larger sections or paragraphs, with a combination of both followed by a short horizontal line or dash, sometimes with more elaboration. White space serves a primarily visual and aesthetic purpose. Scribes often enforce a visual parallelism of identical or similar words across lines. At the bottom left of A9b, the scribe has justified four instances of the verb טמא (*tm*) “to be impure” on four consecutive lines (see inset on next page). This visual play produces cues for a reader flipping through the codex, in the absence of headings, running titles, or page numbers. Another striking example of this play is how letters are gathered on either end of each line to create vertical borderlines surrounding the written page. This is a remarkable feat of scribal ingenuity: the text, indeed the Torah itself, is both the content of the book and an artifact of organization.



A first-century CE fragment of a Dead Sea Scroll (OIM A30303), an example of early Judean script purchased in Jordan in 1956, containing a non-biblical Hebrew poem probably meant for the education of proselytes. Titled by scholars “The Wiles of the Wicked Woman,” this poem personifies as a woman the temptation to abandon the path of righteousness. Compare inset, representing the “square” Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible.

OIM A6957: TWO PAGES OF GENESIS FROM A TRILINGUAL TORAH CODEX

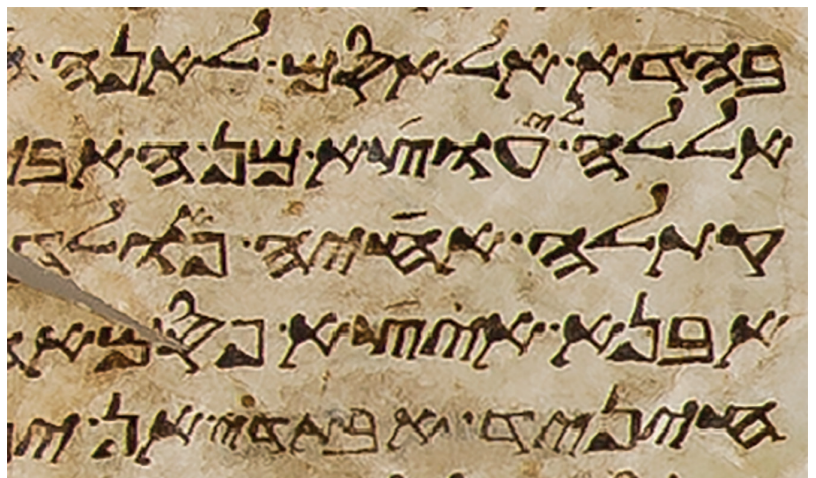
In 1929, Bernhard Moritz (1859–1939), a German scholar of Arabic and an antiquities collector, sold over 350 items to James Henry Breasted for \$12,500 (approximately \$175,000 today), a haul that included numerous Arabic literary papyri as old as the tenth century CE, as well as an important collection of Arabic bookbindings. These and other items have received careful study, but a manuscript described as a fragment of a Samaritan Torah, OIM A6957, has escaped notice. As it turns out, A6957 (see image on pp. 6–7) can confidently be identified as two missing pages from one of the most important manuscripts of the Samaritan Torah in existence: MS London Or. 7562, a large codex currently held in the British Library in London, dated to ca. 1300 CE. This codex has recently received careful study and publication by Tamar Zewi (*The Samaritan Version of Saadya Gaon's Translation of the Pentateuch: Critical Edition and Study of MS London BL OR7562 and Related MSS*, 2015). The pages in A6957 are from near the beginning of the codex, covering Genesis 3:23–5:23.

The join between our manuscript and the London codex can be made visually by consulting published photographs (in need of extensive restoration, the codex in London has yet to be digitized), though the proof is in the perfect textual overlap: the exact verses from Genesis found in OIM A6957 are missing from the London codex, replaced by two restored pages written and inserted in the late nineteenth century (more on this below). Other loose pages from this codex have been recovered: in the 1980s, two manuscripts held in the Firkovitch collection of the National Library of Russia (Firk. Sam. 178 and 179) were identified as originally belonging to Or. 7562, covering missing portions from Genesis and the end of Deuteronomy. Given their length (only a few pages each) and placement in Firkovitch's hoard, these were likely taken from a genizah, as speculated regarding OIM A9. Other missing pages are still at large, possibly buried in a genizah in Palestine—or in a Western collection, awaiting discovery.

The London codex covers the entire Torah, containing nearly two hundred folios or four hundred pages. Its size is imposing, its folios measuring 15½ by 13½ inches. OIM A6957 would have been folios 5–6, thus taking up four pages in the codex. A substantial part of A6957 is now missing, leaving only about half of the inscribed surface. Alas, what is missing from these absent pages is likely irrevocably lost. Besides the *de rigueur* creation of vertical columns, A6957 and its parent in London employ little to no extra ornamentation, as seen in A9. This was a copy meant for study.

We also notice that A6957 is composed of three columns of text per page. This is no ordinary codex of the Torah, for only the rightmost column is the Hebrew text. The other two columns contain translations—the middle in Aramaic, a version called a Targum—and the left in Arabic. The Hebrew is placed on the right, a position of pride in a book where readers go from right to left. Codices like this are called triglots, aligning translations in running parallel for easy consultation and cross-referencing. Or. 7562 is one of only a handful of triglot Samaritan Torah codices in collections outside of Nablus (others can be found in Rome and Paris), making OIM A6957 a rare treasure. Though only one-third of the manuscript is in the Hebrew language, the Hebrew script nevertheless is used throughout due to the sacred nature of the content. Rendering Arabic into Hebrew characters necessarily led to a loss of phonetic information given the different nature of these languages and their scripts. To compensate, the scribe added diacritics to certain Hebrew letters to indicate pronunciation. For example, since the Hebrew alphabet cannot distinguish Arabic *hā'* (ح) from *khā'* (خ), a short stroke is added over Hebrew *het* (ה in the square script) when the latter is meant.

Scribes made editorial alterations to the text as it was used over the centuries. On the second line of the closeup of OIM A6957, some even erased and corrected words, which is challenging on a parchment surface that, unlike papyrus (which affords easy erasure of ink by means of moisture alone), requires that the ink be scraped away. An example of erasure and re-inscription can be seen on the right: notice the thinner style of writing and the smaller letters toward the left side, telling us that the effaced text, traces of which can be seen beneath, was shorter. The Arabic column of the codex contains far more corrections and additions than the other two, suggesting that, as more of a living document, it was meant to reflect a contemporary, vernacular understanding of the meaning of the Torah.



Closeup of OIM A6957, showing supralinear corrections (lines 2 and 3) as well as re-inscription where portions of the original text were scraped away (line 5). This was done deliberately in order to correct or update the Arabic translation.



The Samaritans, a living community (see contemporary procession of Samaritan Torah above) resides in the village of Kiryat Luza on Mount Gerizim, just over 3 miles south of the center of Nablus (Shechem) in the West Bank and 30 miles north of Jerusalem. Some also live in the city of Holon, south of Tel Aviv.

Philosopher Sa'adia Gaon (882/92–942), a groundbreaking Jewish intellectual during the Abbasid Caliphate and a pioneer of Judaeo-Arabic literature. His translation, called the *Tafsīr*, is the primary source of the Samaritan version found in Or. 7562. It could not be copied over wholesale, however, since Sa'adia based his translation on the Masoretic text of the Torah. In her study of Or. 7562, Tamar Zewi argues that the scribes were also influenced by Christian Arabic translations of the scriptures. Zewi's careful study of errors in the London codex has shown that the Arabic column was visually transcribed into the Hebrew alphabet from a version of the *Tafsīr* written in the Arabic script (versions in both the Hebrew and the Arabic script were in circulation) and tweaked to match the Samaritan Torah in the right column. All of these considerations make this codex, and now OIM A6957, an artifact of singular importance.

After this brief but rather dizzying overview of the different streams of centuries-old traditions that converge on this magnificent triglot codex, we can end by returning to the orphaned pages we have here in Chicago. We see that the folios of OIM A6957 come from the same sheet of parchment, meaning they must have been the top page in a gathering of five sheets, which were subsequently folded in the middle, sewn along the spine, and bound alongside others to make the codex. Looking closely at the middle of the manuscript, one can spot the holes left by the thread that sewed this sheet to the others. In 1894, sixteen years before the codex was sold to the British Library, a Samaritan priest restored the missing pages in what became Or. 7562 by reinscribing the lost pages on paper. He may have received this codex in a lacking state, but it is equally possible that he inspected it and pulled out any sheets that were significantly damaged to be re-inscribed, relegating them to a genizah . . . or setting them aside for interested collectors. The priest responsible for restoring the triglot was Salāmah ben 'Amrām ben Salāmah (1863–1931), the son of the high priest whose signature OIM A9 bears.

Artifacts of cultural heritage that were allowed to leave Samaritan communities like that of Nablus under dire financial circumstances—or were pilfered from sacred spaces—can now be made available to all, first and foremost to the Samaritans themselves—the modern-day successors of 'Amrām ben Salāmah—as well as to the worldwide scholarly community who labors in their service by piecing together a manuscript heritage for a living culture that once came dangerously close to being lost forever. This availability is made possible in large part by digital technology, which has freed hundreds of Samaritan manuscripts from the dark shelves of libraries in St. Petersburg, Rome, London, and other places, once viewable only by a few, now made accessible to all via the internet. This endeavor has been spearheaded by institutions like the British Library, the Vatican Museum, and the National Library of Israel. Without this still-growing worldwide network, artifacts like OIM A6957 will remain, if not unstudied, virtually un-patriated; codices will remain incomplete, and the story of the textual traditions of the Hebrew Bible will continue to have missing pages.

As exciting a join as this is, the discovery of a missing portion of Or. 7562 in Chicago fills in a gap, albeit small, in a crucial witness to the Samaritan Torah in three separate traditions. Although dating from the fourteenth century CE, the triglot is among the earliest important witnesses of the Aramaic and Arabic translations of the Samaritan Torah, helping scholars postulate the content and shape of lost texts from many centuries before the codex was inscribed.

Manuscripts of the Samaritan Targum show a great deal of fluidity as well as a gradual accretion of interpretive renderings, but the text of Or. 7562 is considered a closer representative of what the original Samaritan Targums looked like in the ca. third and fourth centuries CE. This similarity can be seen when comparing the text of Or. 7562 to the oldest surviving Aramaic translations of the scriptures, namely those found among the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Targum Onkelos, believed to be the oldest Targum used by Rabbinic Judaism. Aramaic had replaced Hebrew as the dominant spoken language of early Judaism by the last few centuries BCE. A similar process had occurred several centuries earlier, when the scriptures were translated by Jews into Greek (a version called the Septuagint). While the Rabbinic Targums contain a great deal of interpretive or midrashic expansion, the Samaritan Targum is a uniquely literal translation of the Hebrew, thus making it useful for reconstructing what the Hebrew Torah looked like in the dark centuries where manuscript evidence is lacking.

The Arabic version of the Samaritan Torah points to a process like those that yielded the Greek and Aramaic translations: Arabic replaced Aramaic as the dominant spoken language of Samaritans across the Middle East by the eleventh century. With an Arabic version of the Torah a pressing desideratum, a popular precedent was available, namely the Arabic translation made by the rabbi and phi-

THREE WRITINGS FOR GOD'S NAME

MOABITE SAMARITAN & JEWISH

Below are three writings of the word YHWH, the name of the God of the Torah, worshiped by the ancient Israelites and Samaritans. At left is the Samaritan script (fourteenth century CE, taken from OIM A9), which should be compared with the contemporaneous square Hebrew script of the Jewish Masoretic Text seen on the right (taken from OIM A11245). The ancestor of both of these, which scholars call "paleo-Hebrew," can be glimpsed on the Moabite Mesha Stele (pictured center), a royal inscription erected by King Mesha of Moab, located in what is now Jordan. A full-scale reproduction of it can be found in the Oriental Institute's Megiddo Gallery, making it handy for illustration. On this stele, Mesha commemorates his military victories over his arch-rival, Omri the king of Israel (ca. 840 BCE), and brags about plundering ritual vessels of the god YHWH from an Israelite temple. The Hebrew and Moabite languages were nearly identical, and both were written with an alphabetic script derived from Phoenician. Notice how the Samaritan script resembles the older script more closely: it represents its own trajectory, bypassing the Aramaic influence that facilitated the evolution of the Judean script toward the square shape. Although all three scripts represent consonants only, the Masoretic Hebrew script contains diacritics above and below the consonants of YHWH. These diacritics, called niqqud, indicate the vowels that the reader should pronounce. Because of the sacredness of the name YHWH in Jewish tradition, however, the vowels indicate that the reader should say "Adonai," Hebrew for "my Lord," not "Yahweh," which is how scholars think the name sounded at one time. English translations of the Hebrew Bible follow suit and translate YHWH as "the Lord." In the Samaritan reading tradition of their Torah, YHWH is pronounced Shema, meaning "Name" in Samaritan Hebrew, borrowing the Aramaic form of the word.



Moabite



Samaritan



Jewish (Masoretic)

