

The roots of the Judean-Samaritan schism

9TH CENTURY BCE “When all Israel saw that the king would not listen to them, the people answered the king, “What share do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Look now to your own house, O David.” So Israel went away to their tents.” (1 Kings 12.16)

Jeroboam leads Israel in rebellion against the Jerusalem-centered monarchy, re-establishing the separate nation in the north independent of Judah. After that, the Deuteronomistic History judges all northern kings according to whether they follow “the sin of Jeroboam,” i.e., leading people away from Jerusalem.

8TH CENTURY BCE “The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria in place of the people of Israel; they took possession of Samaria and settled in its cities.” (2 Kings 17.24)

The passage continues to note that the people previously known as “Israelites” but now called “Samaritans” (after the capital city’s name) had mixed with those brought by the Assyrians and worshiped both YHWH and their previous gods.

6^{TH-5TH} CENTURY BCE “When the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the returned exiles were building a temple to YHWH, the God of Israel, they approached Zerubbabel and the heads of families and said to them, “Let us build with you, for we worship your God as you do, and we have been sacrificing to him ever since the days of King Esar-haddon of Assyria who brought us here.” But Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the rest of the heads of families in Israel said to them, “You shall have no part with us in building a house to our God; but we alone will build to YHWH, the God of Israel, as King Cyrus of Persia has commanded us.” Then the people of the land discouraged the people of Judah, and made them afraid to build, and they bribed officials to frustrate their plan throughout the reign of King Cyrus of Persia and until the reign of King Darius of Persia.” (Ezra 4.1-3)

As a result of this rejection, the people now known as “Samaritans” built their own temple to YHWH on Mt. Gerizim. See also Josephus, *Antiquities* XI, 75-108 for a parallel account.