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A SAMARITAN TEMPLE TO RIVAL JERUSALEM ON MOUNT GERIZIM

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INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the Common Era (CE), when Judea was officially named a Roman province, there was a clear division between the Samaritans and the Jews. According to the writings of the ancient historian Josephus, the estrangement dated back to the time of Nehemiah with the ostracism of the Samaritans by the returning Jewish exiles from Babylon. In response to being denied the right to help rebuild the temple to YHWH in Jerusalem, the Samaritans built their own temple to YHWH on Mount Gerizim to rival the temple in Jerusalem. Until Yitzhak Magen began his excavations of Mount Gerizim in 1983,¹ scholars tended to ignore the possibility of the temple and questioned the exact location if it had even existed. The few scholarly articles written before or during Magen's excavations continued this skepticism based on previous surveys, smaller excavations of the site, and the literary evidence—or lack thereof.² However, despite the lack of literary sources regarding the temple, Magen's excavations offer strong evidence to support a Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim dated to the Persian period. This means that the Samaritans were building their own temple contemporary with the Jews rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem. The archaeological evidence is supportive of Magen's claim of a temple on Mount Gerizim where priestly rituals and sacrifices took place and Josephus's claim that there were similarities between the Samaritan and Jerusalem Temples.³ The existence of another temple to YHWH, contemporary with the rebuilding of the one in Jerusalem, showcases the growing contention between the Jews and the Samaritans and gives a probable beginning to the infamous divide between the two nations.

¹ Magen Yitzhak, "The Dating of the First Phase of the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim in Light of the Archaeological Evidence." Pages 157-193 in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century*

BCE. Edited by Oded Lipschits, Gary N. Knoppers, and Rainer Albertz. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2007.

² Robert T. Anderson wrote one such article in 1991 called "The Elusive Samaritan Temple." Although he does not outright deny the existence of the temple, he believes it was highly unlikely based on earlier surveys of the site, previous excavations, and the lack of evidence in the literature. Anderson relied primarily on the lack of reference to a Samaritan Temple outside of Josephus's *Antiquities* (that dated the temple to the Hellenistic period) and an obscure reference in Abu'l Fath's *Annals* in the fourteenth century CE (here the temple is dated to the Persian period), as well as the lack of archeological evidence from surveys and small excavations. Early surveys and excavations were not on the same area of Mount Gerizim as Magen's excavations but on what is now known as the place for the Temple of Zeus built by the Emperor Hadrian. The Samaritan literature holds no account of a temple on Mount Gerizim but does mention a tabernacle there. The Hebrew Bible places the tabernacle in Shiloh and has no remarks concerning a Samaritan Temple anywhere. Anderson, Robert T. "The Elusive Samaritan Temple." *The Biblical archaeologists* (June 1991): 104–107.

³ Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.8.

HISTORY OF MOUNT GERIZIM

In the Hebrew Bible there are numerous references to the city of Shechem, which was built between Mount Gerizim and its sister peak, Mount Ebal. The first is Abram's visit to the Promised Land in Genesis 12, and another appears when Jacob purchases land near Shechem in Genesis 33. For Mount Gerizim, one of the earliest references is when Moses is recounting the blessings and curses to Israel in Deuteronomy. "When the Lord your God has brought you into the land that you are entering to occupy, you shall set the blessings on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal."⁴ Moses gave this same command again in Deuteronomy 27 when he ordered the Levites to bless Israel from Mount Gerizim, and curse Israel from Mount Ebal.⁵ The command was fulfilled in the eighth chapter of Joshua:

All Israel, alien as well as citizen, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the ark in front of the levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded at the first, that they should bless the people of Israel.⁶

Mentions of Mount Gerizim by name are scarce following the Israelites entrance into the Promised Land.

When the land was divided among the tribes, Mount Gerizim and Shechem were part of the land given to the tribe of Ephraim and as such were part of the Northern Kingdom of Israel under the divided monarchy until the Assyrian destruction of Israel in 721 BCE (Before Common Era).⁷ In 2 Kings 17 Assyria took the indigenous Israelite people from the Northern Kingdom of Israel and placed them elsewhere in the Assyrian Empire.⁸ The population vacuum was filled with foreign peoples who took on a form of YHWH worship according to 2 Kings 17:24–28.⁹ Considering the evidence that the

⁴ Deuteronomy 11:29, NRSV.

⁵ Deuteronomy 27:11–14, NRSV.

⁶ Joshua 8:33, NRSV.

⁷ Magen, Yitzhak. *Mount Gerizim Excavations Volume II: A Temple City. Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2008. 172.*

⁸ Bustenay Obed in his book *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* states that the Assyrian deportation system was "one of the cornerstones of the construction and development of the Assyrian Empire" (19). In the three centuries of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, scholars estimate the Assyrians deported a total of four and a half million people from their homes. The greatest amount of deportations occurred during the reigns of Tiglath-Pileser III, Sargon II, and Sennacherib—the period of time in which the Northern Kingdom of Israel was destroyed. However, these numbers do not suggest a total deportation of the population, in fact, they show that the Assyrians were selective in what portion of the population was moved. Members of the royal family were deported, as well as higher government officials, but the Assyrians were not restrictive in their selection also taking from the working classes as well. Men and their families were deported together, with whole communities transplanted to another area of the empire. Whole communities were less likely to try to return to their own land because of the continued kinship of their religion and culture. Obed, Bustenay. *Mass Deportations and Deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Wiesbaden, 1979).

⁹ According to Obed, Sargon II took the Israelites to Assyria and the "cities of the Medes" (27) and then settled people from Mesopotamia to Samaria. The Assyrian Empire often deported peoples from the

Assyrian Empire did not, perhaps, deport an entire population, it is possible that a small population of Israelites continued to live in the area of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, while some also fled south to Jerusalem. If part of the population remained, then at the time of Nehemiah, the Samaritans would have been a mixture of Gentiles and Israelites who worshipped YHWH. Roughly a century later, when Babylon sacked Jerusalem, they also left a portion of the population behind while the rest of the population was taken into captivity. This remnant may have interacted with the Samaritans, and further population mixing likely occurred. If the Samaritans worshipped YHWH due to being part Israelite, it would help explain why they wanted to aid the Jews in the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem when the exiles returned from Babylon.¹⁰

LITERARY EVIDENCE OF A TEMPLE ON MOUNT GERIZIM

As briefly mentioned above, the only major source for a temple to YHWH on Mount Gerizim is found in Josephus's *Antiquities*; although a passing reference to the characters of Josephus's story can be found in the book of Nehemiah but they remain unnamed. There are no references of a Samaritan temple in the Samaritan religious or secular corpus besides a small reference to the temple in Abu'l Fath's *Annals*, from the fourteenth century CE.¹¹ In the eighth chapter of *Antiquities*, Josephus tells the story of the priest Manasseh, the brother of the high priest at the Jerusalem temple. Manasseh was married to Nicaso, the daughter of Sanballat, the governor of Samaria.¹² Due to the prophet Ezra's reforms regarding the marriages to Gentiles some Israelites had entered into during the Babylonian captivity,¹³ the elders in Jerusalem were not willing to allow Manasseh to continue in aiding his brother in the Jerusalem temple because he was married to someone outside the covenant. The returning Jews from Babylon did not believe that the Samaritans worshipped YHWH, but this was likely not the case.¹⁴ Accordingly, the elders told Manasseh that he must either divorce his wife, or never work at the altar in the temple again.¹⁵ Manasseh told his father-in-law, Sanballat, that although he loved his wife, he would not allow himself to be deprived of working at the altar to stay with her. Sanballat promised Manasseh that if he would not divorce Nicaso, then Sanballat would supply Manasseh not only with a temple to work in but a high priesthood position as well.¹⁶

Josephus wrote that this interaction between Sanballat and Manasseh took place contemporarily with Alexander the Great's conquest of the Near East around 332 BCE.¹⁷ However, in Nehemiah 13 this event is also alluded to when referring to the marriage of

east to the west, and then the west to the east. They would also deport different groups of the same people to different areas of the empire, and vice versa many different foreign peoples were put together in one new area.

¹⁰ Ezra 4, NRSV.

¹¹ Anderson, "The Elusive Samaritan Temple." 104–107.

¹² Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.8.309.

¹³ Ezra 9:1–10:5, NRSV.

¹⁴ Shanks, Hershel, ed. *Ancient Israel From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*. Washington DC: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2011.

¹⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.8.306–307.

¹⁶ Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.8.309–310.

¹⁷ Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.8.304–305.

Levites to foreign wives. “And one of the sons of Jehoiada, son of the high priest Eliashib, was the son-in-law of Sanballat the Horonite; I chased him away from me.”¹⁸ This offers two separate dates for the initial construction of the Mount Gerizim temple based on three separate literary passages: around 332 BCE during the conquests of Alexander the Great as told by Josephus: a century earlier, during the time of Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, as shown through the passage in Nehemiah; and in the fourteenth century CE writings of Abu’l Fath. The strong archaeological evidence shown by Magen’s excavations makes an earlier dating preferable and shows the growing contention between the two peoples, because the temples would be going up at the same time.

GEOGRAPHY OF MOUNT GERIZIM

Mount Gerizim is part of a central mountain range near the ancient city of Shechem in what is now the West Bank. Gerizim is one of the two highest peaks in Samaria, with an elevation of 886 meters above sea level. Its sister peak just north of Shechem is Mount Ebal, which stands 936 meters above sea level.¹⁹ Mount Gerizim was not part of any major road system in ancient Samaria but was connected with ancient Shechem by a single road. The mountain itself is not suitable for agriculture and lacks a source of running water.²⁰ Cisterns are prominent features in all building on Mount Gerizim, and the inhabitants depended on rainfall for their water supply. The mountain consists of rock too brittle for construction²¹, thus many blocks for the Hellenistic period buildings were shipped in from elsewhere in Samaria. The weather on Mount Gerizim is cold and windy and it is often covered in snow in the winter.²² All these features make it clear that the building of a temple on Mount Gerizim was not a convenient undertaking, but was motivated by traditional religious views that the Samaritans held regarding the mountain.

THE EXCAVATIONS OF MOUNT GERIZIM

Yitzhak Magen worked continually on the Mount Gerizim excavations for eighteen years beginning in 1983.²³ He believes that the Samaritan temple was the first structure built on Mount Gerizim,²⁴ despite the city of Shechem and the surrounding area having been occupied since the early Bronze Age.²⁵ Magen divides the building of the sacred precinct into three phases: Persian/Iron Age (mid-5th century BCE)²⁶, a Hellenistic expansion (ca. 200 BCE)²⁷, and the construction of the surrounding Hellenistic city. During the Persian period the sacred precinct measured 96 meters north to south by 98 meters east to west. At its largest during the Hellenistic period it measured 212 meters

¹⁸ Nehemiah 13:28, NRSV.

¹⁹ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 3.

²⁰ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 4.

²¹ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 4.

²² Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 5.

²³ Magen, “The Dating of the First Phase,” 157.

²⁴ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 97.

²⁵ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 4.

²⁶ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 103.

²⁷ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 98.

north to south by 136 meters east to west.²⁸ The Samaritan temple was destroyed by the Hasmonean dynast John Hyrcanus I around 111-110 BCE.²⁹ Following its destruction, there was a large gap in the archaeological evidence until the Byzantine period when the Emperor Zeno (476-491 CE) built the Church of Mary Theotokos on the mountain.³⁰ The remains of the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim are nonexistent because the Byzantine church was built directly on top of the temple's ruins.³¹

According to Josephus's *Antiquities*, the original Persian period precinct built by Sanballat for Manasseh was an imitation of the Persian period temple built in Jerusalem.³² The northern wall of the precinct was 73 meters long and housed a six-chamber gate that measured 14 by 15 meters.³³ The gate is almost completely preserved because it was incorporated into the new gate built during the Hellenistic expansion.³⁴ Little of the eastern and southern walls and their gates remain from the Persian period because they were destroyed in the Hellenistic period expansion to the south and east.³⁵ Like the northern wall, the western wall was preserved fully at 84 meters in length, 2 meters high, and 1.3 meters thick. It was built using large fieldstones made from the natural rock on the mountain. There is no gate along the western wall likely because the Holy of Holies of the temple was on the western edge of the precinct. This would then place the altar on the east side of the precinct.³⁶ As stated earlier, the Persian period precinct was in use for two hundred and fifty years before the Hellenistic expansion.³⁷

The temple was renovated and expanded during the Hellenistic period in the early second century BCE.³⁸ The sacred precinct no longer imitated the temple in Jerusalem, and the building materials were better. Many building stones from the Hellenistic period that were found on Mount Gerizim bear stonecutter marks that indicated they were brought in from outside the Gerizim area. This hints that the Hellenistic renovations of the precinct were built around the Persian period walls, increasing their width. These stones can easily be seen on the western and northern walls of the site.³⁹

All three gates of the precinct were extended or remade during the Hellenistic expansion. The Hellenistic north gate was built outside the Persian gate, but it made the northern entrance smaller than it was before.⁴⁰ This changed the inflow of traffic into the precinct. In the Persian period pilgrims coming to the temple entered in through the north or south gate and exited through the opposite gate. This is similar to the flow of traffic at the Jerusalem temple. By making the north gate smaller, the inflow of pilgrims was redirected to the eastern gate—which became the main gate. In the Hellenistic period, the eastern gate was extended along with the whole eastern wing of the precinct. Large monumental staircases came up the steep slope of the mountain, and large courtyards

²⁸ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 143.

²⁹ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 98.

³⁰ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 245.

³¹ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 97.

³² Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.8.

³³ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 115.

³⁴ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 116.

³⁵ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 120.

³⁶ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 110.

³⁷ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 98.

³⁸ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 103.

³⁹ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 112.

⁴⁰ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 118.

were built to accommodate the pilgrims who would come to sacrifice at Mount Gerizim.⁴¹ The southern area of the precinct saw just as much renovation as the eastern area. Most of the Persian period wall was gone, and the gate as well. The Hellenistic expansion pushed the southern wall south, and the southern gate moved to the southwest corner of the precinct. This western gate was the second entrance for the pilgrims.⁴²

The final phase of the Mount Gerizim temple was the construction of the Hellenistic city on the north and west slopes of the mountain. There appears to be no central planning to the city, and it might have grown organically as the population increased with the popularity of the temple.⁴³ The city had no major defenses, but there was evidence of some attempts at defense when John Hyrcanus I attacked and burned the city in 111-110 BCE. The population most likely consisted of priests and Levites who officiated at the temple. It is possible that when Alexander the Great seized Samaria, the capital, a large number of non-Levites moved to the area, which might have become the new Samaritan center.⁴⁴

ARCHITECTURAL REMAINS AND SMALL FINDS OF SACRED PRECINCT

The finds from the Mount Gerizim temple precinct consisted largely of pottery shards, coins, and bones. There were also a few architectural remains of a door lintel, some capitals, and some altars. Many inscriptions were found, but none *in situ*. The small finds show an earlier date for the precinct on Mount Gerizim. As stated earlier, Josephus placed the construction of the Samaritan temple contemporary with Alexander the Great's movement east; however, the pottery finds were dated to the Persian, Hellenistic, and Byzantine periods, and there is a distinct layer of Persian period shards from the fifth century BCE.⁴⁵ The same can be said for the coins found. Although many of them were from the Hellenistic period, there were some earlier coins that were dated to the same time as the pottery.⁴⁶ Along with the literary evidence, the small finds of the pottery and coins were large enough to comfortably date the original sacred precinct to the Persian period, contemporary with Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple.

Although none were found *in situ*, the inscriptions found on Mount Gerizim help support the claim Magen has made that there was a temple on Mount Gerizim and that it was for the worship of YHWH. Many of the inscriptions were made to YHWH from a faithful member of the community at Gerizim.⁴⁷ The collection of inscriptions were written in the Greek, Aramaic, and Paleo-Hebrew languages, and they all contained votive offerings and formulas related to a house of YHWH like "House of God," "before God," and "before the Lord." One particular Aramaic inscription read that the temple on Gerizim was a "House of Sacrifice."⁴⁸ This is the same title that was given to Solomon's temple by the Lord in 2 Chronicles 7:12. "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this

⁴¹ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 122–129.

⁴² Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 103.

⁴³ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 9.

⁴⁴ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 98.

⁴⁵ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 167.

⁴⁶ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 168.

⁴⁷ Magen, Yitzhak. *Mount Gerizim Excavations Volume I*. Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2008.

⁴⁸ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 155.

place for myself as a house of sacrifice.” This inscription shows that the Samaritans saw their temple as equal to, or greater than, the temple in Jerusalem.

The presence of sacrificial inscriptions suggests that there were some priestly ritual sacrifices being performed on Mount Gerizim, and the presence of bone fragments supports this claim. There are two areas that had layers of ash and bone fragments. One was in the fortified enclosure on the western side of the precinct where cooking pot fragments were also found.⁴⁹ It is possible that the area was where the remains of the sacrifices were disposed of when they left the altar of the temple. The other area was a large ash and bone layer on the eastern side of the precinct. If the temple were situated like the Jerusalem temple, then it would have been facing the east with the main altar on the eastern side. However, it was in the northeastern corner of the Persian period precinct where the remains of a clay altar were later found with a thick later of ash and bone on the floor. This might have been another altar on which sacrifices could be burned when the main altar was in use. It is also possible that this area was the “Place of Ashes,” as found in Leviticus 1:16, where sacrifices were prepared before going out to the main altar of the temple.⁵⁰ Either way, this area appears to have been used for the deposit of the sacrificial bones not only from the altar in the “Place of Ashes” but also from the main altar before the temple when it was cleaned.⁵¹ The rest of the ash and bone fragments were found in the fill of the Hellenistic floor of the precinct. In total, there were over 400,000 bone fragments found around the sacred precinct, and although not all of them have been analyzed, the ones that have were of animals that were sacrificed young, mostly less than a year old.⁵²

Although the small finds were important in Magen’s dating of the original precinct, it was the discovery of two stone capitals that can artistically link the precinct on Mount Gerizim to the Persian period, and in extension to the temple(s) in Jerusalem because of the architectural similarities to capitals of the Iron Age.⁵³ The capitals were adorned with a tree of life and nature motifs that were extremely popular in the seventh and sixth centuries BCE,⁵⁴ but this Phoenician style disappeared from most architecture at the end of the Iron Age.⁵⁵ The capitals themselves were dated to the Persian period, but their design was similar to the capitals that have been found in other monumental building projects of the Israelite monarchy before the Babylonian exile. Those capitals too had a natural design theme; however, the Iron Age capitals usually had a central triangle that was lacking from the Mount Gerizim capitals. The masonry work of the capitals on Mount Gerizim was reminiscent of the capitals of another famous temple in the Levant—the Iron Age temple built by King Solomon of Israel—of which no archaeological evidence remains, but a literary description does.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 108.

⁵⁰ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 117.

⁵¹ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 108.

⁵² Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 160–162.

⁵³ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 152–154.

⁵⁴ Stern, Ephraim and Yitzhak Magen. “Archaeological Evidence for the First Stage of the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim.” *Israel Exploration Journal* (2002): 49–57.

⁵⁵ Magen, *Mount Gerizim Excavations Vol. 2*, 152.

⁵⁶ Stern, “Archaeological Evidence.”

COMPARISON TO JERUSALEM TEMPLES

The first Israelite temple was built sometime around 968 BCE under the reign of King Solomon, son of King David, and took a total of seven years to complete.⁵⁷ The Babylonians in 586 BCE destroyed this temple, and a new temple was rebuilt under the guidance of Zerubbabel and dedicated in 515 BCE, which was then renovated by Herod the Great.⁵⁸ As stated in the Hebrew Bible and the *Letter of Aristeas*, the second temple built by Zerubbabel was made in the image of Solomon's temple, using the same dimensions, but the returning exiles lacked the funds to make it in the grandeur of Solomon's temple.⁵⁹ Solomon's temple was essentially a larger version of the Israelite tabernacle, and its tripartite floor plan is similar to other contemporary temples in the ancient Near East. Descriptions of Solomon's temple are found in 1 Kings 5-7, where it mentions Solomon hiring workers from Tyre in Phoenicia. Architectural similarities between Solomon's temple and other contemporary temples are likely due to this hiring of outside help. Like other temples of its time, Solomon's temple faced east with the Holy of Holies at the west most part of the temple, and a two-columned porch at the east.⁶⁰ In this same way, the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim was situated facing east with the main altar outside the eastern doors, and the lack of a gate on the western wall of the precinct is probably due to the Holy of Holies being that close to the western wall.

As stated above, the second Israelite temple was built in the image of Solomon's, and according to Josephus, the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim was built in the same image of Zerubbabel's temple. Therefore, there may be some connection between the Samaritan temple and Solomon's temple—particularly with the columns found by Magen in his excavations. The outside porch of Solomon's temple had two large freestanding pillars, either made of stone or bronze, which were eighteen cubits high with an additional five cubits each for their capitals.⁶¹ The description of the capitals is as follows:

There were nets of checker work with wreaths of chain work for the capitals on the tops of the pillars... the tops of the pillars in the vestibule were of lily-work, four cubits high... there were two hundred pomegranates in rows all around... the tops of the pillars was lily-work.⁶²

What are described as lily-work on Solomon's capitals may be the vertical volutes of Aeolic capitals. These capitals certainly seem to share a nature motif with the ones found on Mount Gerizim, and the capitals on Mount Gerizim share a similar structure to the capitals of temples contemporary with Solomon's.⁶³

⁵⁷ 1 Kings 6:38, NRSV.

⁵⁸ William J. Hamblin and David Rolph Seely. *Solomon's Temple: Myth and History* (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2007), 23.

⁵⁹ Hamblin, *Solomon's Temple*. 41.

⁶⁰ Hamblin, *Solomon's Temple*. 30.

⁶¹ Philip P. Betancourt, *The Aeolic Style in Architecture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 38–40.

⁶² 1 Kings 7:17–22, NRSV.

⁶³ Hamblin, *Solomon's Temple*. 26.

CONCLUSION

Despite the lack of literary evidence that fueled the skepticism regarding the existence of a Samaritan temple, the excavations on Mount Gerizim by Yitzhak Magen have solidified its existence. Following Magen's final publications, a Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim has been widely accepted in the academic community; however, the dating of the original precinct is still discussed. Although many of the small finds from Magen's excavation have been dated to the Hellenistic period, the existence of Persian period findings, with their own strata, help support Magen's claim for an earlier date of the original precinct construction. The similarities of the capital motifs to those of other capitals of the Persian period also help support Magen's earlier date. The bone fragments, altars, and inscriptions found at Gerizim at least show that it was a temple built for the worship of YHWH just like the one in Jerusalem.

The importance of an earlier date for a Samaritan temple to YHWH is that it is a tangible example of the growing contention between the Samaritans and the Jews. It is evidence that two temples to YHWH were being built contemporarily with each other and were competing with each other over which was the true temple to YHWH. And although there is no evidence linking the two temples outside of Josephus, the archeological remains of the sacred precinct on Mount Gerizim are similar enough to those described in the Hebrew Bible that we may gain a simple picture of what the Jerusalem temple would have looked like in the Persian period since none of the temple remains after Herod's renovations. Outside of its possible connection to the temples in Jerusalem, the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim has a rich history from its beginning to its end and remains to this day an important religious center for the Samaritan people.