

Abraham and Sanballat

BARTOSZ ADAMCZEWSKI (CARDINAL STEFAN WYSZYŃSKI UNIVERSITY
IN WARSAW)

ABSTRACT

Several important features of the narrative character of Abraham allude to the features of the historical person of Sanballat, the first Israelite governor of the Persian province of Samaria. The most important common features of Abraham and Sanballat are the origin in the city of Haran, a non-Yahwistic name, being related to the cult of the moon god Sin, being given the land of Israel as a hereditary possession, founding the central sanctuary of Yahweh on Mount Gerizim, and respecting an important priest from Jerusalem. These and other common features point to the origin of the book of Genesis in the secular elite of the Persian province of Samaria ca. 350–340 B.C.

KEYWORDS: Abraham, Sanballat, Samaria, Mount Gerizim, Persian period

A INTRODUCTION

In biblical scholarship, Abraham and Sanballat belong to two different worlds—the exegesis of the book of Genesis and the history of the Persian-period Samaria. At first glance, they do not have anything in common. However, the most unexpected things at times become the most interesting ones.

The thought that the narrative character of Abraham from the book of Genesis has some features of the historical person of Sanballat is not entirely new. It was mentioned in passing by Diana V. Edelman. In an article published in the year 2013, she wrote,

Abraham serves in the narrative as the common ancestor for people living in the territories of Israel/Samerina and Judah/Yehud. He travels through both areas, erecting altars where he calls upon the name of Yhwh, and has a dual origin in “Ur of the Chaldees” and in Haran.... The governor of Samerina in the mid-fifth century was Sinuballit the Haranite. Abraham may be a Persian-era creation to produce a neutral, common ancestor for the North and the South and

* Submitted: 08/10/2020; peer-reviewed: 11/12/2020; accepted: 18/12/2020. Bartosz Adamczewski, “Abraham and Sanballat,” *Old Testament Essays* 34 no. 1 (2021): 14 – 26. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2021/v34n1a3>.

their Diasporas. Abraham's activity at Shechem and Bethel, however, seems designed to include an Israelite/Samaritan audience.¹

Diana V. Edelman's argument is therefore twofold. She first argues that the activity of the narrative character of Abraham in Shechem and Bethel geographically corresponds to the activity of Sanballat in the territory of the Persian-period Israel/Samerina. The second argument is only implicit, but it can be deduced from Diana V. Edelman's claim. She seems to make a linguistic connection between Haran, regarded as one of the places of the origin of Abraham, and the adjectival characterisation of Sanballat as "the Haranite." Let us look closer at this connection.

B SANBALLAT THE HORONITE OR THE HARANITE?

Sanballat is mentioned in the Bible 10 times, and only in the book of Nehemiah. In this book, the name of Sanballat is three times supplemented with the Hebrew postmodifier *ההרני* (Neh 2:10, 19; 13:28), evidently derived from the toponym *הרן*, which can be vocalised as Horon, Haran, et cetera. It may be related to the towns of Lower or Upper Beth-horon in the territory of Ephraim (Josh 21:22), on the border with Benjamin (Josh 16:3, 5; 18:13–14). This is the most widely accepted interpretation of the appellative *ההרני*.

There is, however, a significant problem with this identification. Nehemiah mentions Sanballat *ההרני* together with Tobiah the Ammonite official as well as Geshem the Arabian (Neh 2:10, 19). If the appellative *הרני* were related to Beth-horon, an insignificant town in the territory of Ephraim, it would not be parallel to the two other appellatives, "the Ammonite" and "the Arabian." Therefore, it can be argued that the appellative *ההרני* is not related to Beth-horon, but rather to the city of Haran in Upper Mesopotamia.² The name of this city, in contrast to that of Beth-horon, with its regular *scriptio plena* *הורן* (Josh 10:10–11 etc.), *הרון* (Josh 18:13–14 etc.), or *הורון* (1 Chr 6:53, etc.), is written in the Bible as *הרן* (Gen 11:31, etc.), which exactly corresponds to the appellative *ההרני* (Neh 2:10, 19; 13:28). The appellative *ההרני*, vocalised as ha-Ḥārānī, would then better correspond to the derogative designations of Nehemiah's rivals as

¹ Diana V. Edelman, "Genesis: A Composition for Construing a Homeland of the Imagination for Elite Scribal Circles or for Educating the Illiterate?," in *Writing the Bible: Scribes, Scribalism and Script* (ed. Philip R. Davies and Thomas Römer; Durham: Acumen, 2013), 51.

² Cf. Oded Tammuz, "Will the Real Sanballat Please Stand Up?," in *Samaritans: Past and Present: Current Studies* (ed. Menachem Mor, Friedrich V. Reiterer and Waltraud Winkler; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 56; Étienne Nodet, "Sânballat de Samarie," *RB* 122 (2015): 352–353; Dagmar Kühn, "Abraham in Sichem (Gen 12,6–7): Der Pentateuch als theologisches Gemeinschaftsprojekt im entstehenden Judentum," *TQ* 199 (2019): 32 n. 51.

referring to powerful foreigners, Tobiah the Ammonite official and Geshem the Arabian (Neh 2:10, 19).

The designation of Sanballat as "the Haranite" and not "the Horonite" also well corresponds to the meaning of his name. The Akkadian name *Sîn-uballit* means "may [the moon god] Sin give him life."³ The name of Sanballat is therefore related to the moon god Sin. On the other hand, the city of Haran was well known in antiquity as one of the main centres of the cult of the moon god Sin.⁴ Therefore, the appellation "the Haranite" well suits Sanballat as a person named after the moon god Sin and originating from the Mesopotamian city of Haran and not from the Ephraimite town of Beth-Horon.

At this point, we can trace the first important connections to the biblical character of Abraham. The book of Genesis refers to the Mesopotamian city of Haran as the proximate origin of the character of Abram (Gen 12:4–5). Likewise, Sanballat the Haranite seems to originate from the Mesopotamian city of Haran.

The name of Abram, the first patriarch of the Israelites, is surprisingly non-Yahwistic. Likewise non-Yahwistic is the name of Sanballat, in contrast to the clearly Yahwistic names of Sanballat's Judean rival Nehemiah, his Transjordanian ally, Tobiah, as well as Sanballat's sons, Delaiah and Shelemiah. This potentially shameful, pagan feature of the Israelite governor of Samaria could have been reflected in the narrative of Genesis with the use of the likewise non-Yahwistic, apparently pagan name of Abram.

Besides, it is true that the traditional name of Abraham (cf. Isa 29:22, etc.) is not related to the cult of the moon god Sin. However, the name of Abram's father Terah (תֵּרַח), which alludes to the Semitic word for the moon (יָרֵחַ), together with the names of Abram's closest female relatives Sarai/Sarah and Milcah (Gen 11:29), which allude to the names of the closest female relatives of the moon god Sin, in the opinion of many scholars, are probably related to this lunar cult.⁵ Accordingly, the names of Abram's closest relatives also seem to allude to the name of the person of Sanballat.

³ Cf. Alejandro F. Botta, "Sanballat," in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism* (ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 1190.

⁴ Cf. Yoshitaka Kobayashi, "Haran (Place)," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (6 vols.; ed. David N. Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 3:59; Jürgen Tubach, "Haran (Place): I. Ancient Near East and Hebrew Bible/Old Testament," *EBR* 11:293–94; Nodet, "Sânballat," 350.

⁵ Cf. Robert Gnuse, "The Tale of Babel: Parable of Divine Judgment or Human Cultural Diversification?," *BZ* 54 (2010): 240; Dariusz Dziadosz, "Religijny i społeczny status kobiet w tradycjach o Abrahamie (Rdz 11, 27–25,18)," *Verbum Vitae* 19 (2011): 26 n. 8; Jonathan Grossman, *Abram to Abraham: A Literary Analysis of the Abraham Narrative* (Bern: Lang, 2016), 70.

C THE CITY OF UR AND ITS CULT OF THE MOON GOD SIN

Another important link between the character of Abram/Abraham and the person of Sanballat can be traced from the idea of Abram's distant origin being in the city of Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen 11:31). This double origin of Abram, in Ur and in Haran, is rather surprising. It creates a certain tension in the story of Genesis. On the one hand, Yahweh says to Abram that he brought him from Ur of the Chaldeans (Gen 15:7; cf. 11:31). On the other hand, Yahweh refers to Haran as Abram's land and the location of his father's house (Gen 11:32–12:1; 12:4). Moreover, the natural route from Ur to Canaan along the River Euphrates does not lead through the city of Haran, which is located about one hundred kilometres away from the Euphrates. Therefore, Haran was not a natural stop on the way from Ur to the land of Canaan.⁶

Besides, the book of Joshua presents Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, as dwelling "beyond the River" from long ago (Josh 24:2). Similarly, according to this text, Yahweh took Abraham "from beyond the River" (Josh 24:3). The location "beyond the River," presumably the River Euphrates, evidently suits the northern city of Haran, but not that of Ur.⁷ Accordingly, the author of the book of Joshua most probably knew nothing about Abram's origin in the distant city of Ur in Lower Mesopotamia. This idea was formulated only later, in the book of Genesis.⁸

Therefore, the surprising idea of the double origin of Abram in both Ur in Lower Mesopotamia and Haran in Upper Mesopotamia in the book of Genesis requires an explanation which cannot be deduced from the internal logic of the Genesis story. Such an explanation can be provided by the allusive reference of the character of Abram/Abraham to the person of Sanballat. It should be noted that not only Haran in Upper Mesopotamia but also Ur in Lower Mesopotamia was well known in antiquity as one of the main centres of the cult of the moon

⁶ Cf. Jakob Wöhrle, *Fremdlinge im eigenen Land: Zur Entstehung und Intention der priesterlichen Passagen der Vätergeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 28–29; Joseph Blenkinsopp, "The First Family: Terah and Sons," *JSOT* 41/1 (2016): 8; Georg Fischer, *Genesis 1–11* (Freiburg: Herder, 2018), 664.

⁷ Pace Thomas Römer, "Abraham Traditions in the Hebrew Bible outside the Book of Genesis," in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation* (ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 173–174.

⁸ Konrad Schmid suggests the reverse direction of literary dependence, namely, from Genesis to Joshua: idem, "Genesis in the Pentateuch," in Evans, Lohr, and Petersen, *The Book of Genesis*, 36. For the hypothesis of at least partial dependence of the book of Genesis on the book of Joshua, see Gershon Hepner, *Legal Friction: Law, Narrative, and Identity Politics in Biblical Israel* (New York: Lang, 2010), 8; Robert K. Gnuse, "Seven Gay Texts: Biblical Passages Used to Condemn Homosexuality," *BTB* 45 (2015): 72.

god Sin.⁹ Accordingly, the otherwise strange narrative combination of the cities of Ur and Haran as two places of Abram's origin (Gen 11:31–12:4), in fact, presents Abram as closely related to the main centres of the Mesopotamian worship of the moon god Sin. In this way, the character of Abram in Genesis narratively alludes to the name of *Sîn-uballit*, the one to whom "[the moon god] Sin gives life."

D SHECHEM, MORI-YAH AND MOUNT GERIZIM

In his Mesopotamian place of origin, Abram was ordered by Yahweh to go to the land of Canaan (Gen 12:1–5). He came to the place at Shechem, in the territory of Ephraim, and became the first Israelite to whom Yahweh gave the land of Canaan, so that he should possess it as a hereditary possession (Gen 12:6–7; 13:14–17; 15:7, etc.). Here again we can see a close connection to the person of Sanballat. Sanballat, presumably like Nehemiah (Neh 2:1–8), was sent by the Persian king from Haran, a city in Mesopotamia, to go to the province of Samaria to become its first Israelite governor (cf. also Josephus, *Ant.* 11.302),¹⁰ and his heirs evidently became governors after him. Accordingly, the author of Genesis interpreted the order of the Persian king as an order of Yahweh, a claim which also corresponds to postexilic Judean theology (Neh 2:8; Ezra 1:1–4; etc.).¹¹ Similarly, the concept of the land as given by Yahweh to the patriarchs and their descendants as a hereditary possession (Gen 12:6–7; 13:14–17; 15:7; etc.), although the land in fact still belonged to Yahweh (Lev 25:23), resembles the status of the Persian province of Samaria as administered by governors and their descendants, while in fact still belonging to the Persian king.

Another important connection between Abraham and Sanballat refers to the matter of the inauguration of the one central sanctuary of Yahweh. According to Josephus, Sanballat founded the sanctuary of Yahweh on Mount Gerizim (*Ant.* 11.310, 324). Although Josephus rhetorically transposed this event to the Hellenistic period in order to denigrate that sanctuary, his information concerning Sanballat as its founder seems to be reliable.¹²

⁹ Cf. Jean-Cl. Margueron, "Ur (Place)," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (trans. Stephen Rosoff), 6:766; Nodet, "Sânballat," 350.

¹⁰ Cf. Yitzhak Magen, *A Temple City*, vol. 2 of *Mount Gerizim Excavations* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2008), 173; Edelman, "Genesis," 51.

¹¹ It should be noted that no direct literary relationship or relative chronological priority between the book of Genesis and the books of Ezra-Nehemiah is postulated here. The matter of dating the books of Ezra-Nehemiah is a complex issue, which cannot be dealt with here. However, it can be argued that, even if they were written quite late, the books of Ezra-Nehemiah contain some historically reliable information concerning the Persian-period Judea.

¹² Cf. Magen, *Temple City*, 172–174; Jan Dušek, "Mt. Gerizim Sanctuary, Its History and Enigma of Origin," *HBAI* 3 (2014): 114–115.

Did the narrative character of Abraham perform a similar act? According to the book of Genesis, when Abram came to the land of Canaan, he passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh, and he built an altar there (Gen 12:5–7). The location and the Deuteronomic terminology of the place (מקום) at Shechem (Gen 12:6), together with its altar (Gen 12:7), well correspond to the location and the function of the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim. However, in Genesis, the patriarchs build altars of Yahweh at various places—the first one at Shechem (Gen 12:7; 33:20),¹³ but then, going southward, also at Bethel (Gen 12:8; 13:4; 35:1, 3, 7), Hebron (Gen 13:18), and Beersheba (Gen 26:25). Therefore, the sanctuary at Shechem is in this respect not unique.

On the other hand, all these altars are presented in Genesis as places of merely invoking the name of Yahweh, in agreement with the permission granted in Josh 22:10–34 (and the Elephantine papyri: *COS* 3.52:9; 3.53:10–11; cf. 3.51:21, 25)¹⁴ to the places of some Yahwistic worship away from the central sanctuary of Yahweh.¹⁵ Only the enigmatic land, mountain, and place (המקום) of Moriah (Gen 22:2–3) is described in Genesis as the location of the unique altar in Canaan on which, in agreement with the will of Yahweh, burnt offerings may be offered (עלה: Gen 22:2–3, 6–8, 13; *contra* Gen 12:7–8; 13:4, 18; 26:25; 33:20; 35:1, 3, 7).¹⁶ Therefore, the account of offering a burnt offering on Mount Moriah (Gen 22:1–14) illustrates the Deuteronomic idea of the only place of fully legitimate worship of Yahweh (Deut 12:5, 11, 14, 27; 27:6; cf. Josh 8:31; 22:29).

Where was this Mount Moriah located? The identification of Moriah with Jerusalem in 2 Chr 3:1 is certainly later and ideologically clearly Judean, pointing to Jerusalem as the place chosen by Yahweh to build his temple there.¹⁷ The book of Genesis contains no such clear identification.

¹³ Cf. Steffen Leibold, *Raum für Konvivenz: Die Genesis als nachexilische Erinnerungsfigur* (Freiburg: Herder, 2014), 329; Kühn, "Abraham in Sichem," 29–32; John S. Bergsma, "A 'Samaritan' Pentateuch? The Implications of the Pro-Northern Tendency of the Common Pentateuch," in *Paradigm Change in Pentateuchal Research* (ed. Matthias Armgardt, Benjamin Kilchör and Markus Zehnder; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019), 289–290.

¹⁴ Cf. Cynthia Edenburg, "Joshua 24: A Diaspora-oriented Overriding of the Joshua Scroll," *HBAI* 6 (2017): 175.

¹⁵ Cf. Edelman, "Genesis," 55–56.

¹⁶ Cf. Benedikt Hensel, *Die Vertauschung des Erstgeburtssiegens in der Genesis: Eine Analyse der narrativ-theologischen Grundstruktur des ersten Buches der Tora* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 96, 178. The altar of Noah (Gen 8:20) was located outside Canaan in the distant mountains of Ararat.

¹⁷ Cf. Yairah Amit, *Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narrative* (trans. Jonathan Chipman; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 142–147. Jean Louis Ska suggests that 2 Chr 3:1 did not know Gen 22: idem, "Genesis 22: What Question Should We Ask the Text?," *Bib* 94 (2013): 267. However, it can be argued that the author of 2 Chr 3:1 knew Gen 22:1–19 (cf. the

In Genesis, the enigmatic, previously unknown name Moriah (הַמְרִיָּה: Gen 22:2)¹⁸ linguistically alludes to the Deuteronomic place called Moreh (מֹרֶה: Deut 11:30; cf. הַמְּוֵרָה: Judg 7:1; מוֹרָה: Gen 12:6),¹⁹ which was located close to Mount Gerizim (Deut 11:29–30; cf. Gen 12:6: Shechem), contextually presented in Deuteronomy as the place where Yahweh chooses to put his name (cf. Deut 12:5.21 etc.).²⁰ In order to illustrate this Deuteronomic idea, the author of Genesis coined the artificial, theophoric name Mori-Yah (Gen 22:2), which has the name of Yah(weh) linguistically inserted into it, so that it represents linguistically the “place” of the name of Yah(weh) at Moreh. In this procedure, the author of Genesis imitated the well-known example of inserting the name of God (*El*) linguistically into the toponym Beth-El (cf. Gen 28:17, 19). The author of Genesis resolved thereby the problem of the Deuteronomic lack of clarity

use of the Genesis story of Abraham in 1 Chr 1:27–28.32.34), but he did not mention Abraham in 2 Chr 3:1 because he was aware that Yahweh had never appeared to Abraham in Jerusalem.

¹⁸ Cf. Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, vol. 2 of *Genesis* (3rd ed.; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2003), 437; Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 290–291.

¹⁹ Cf. Pekka Pitkänen, “Reading Genesis–Joshua as a Unified Document from an Early Date: A Settler Colonial Perspective,” *BTB* 45 (2015): 15; Bergsma, “Samaritan Pentateuch,” 288–289.

²⁰ For arguments concerning the identification of Yahweh’s chosen place in Deut 11:31–12:28 with Mount Gerizim, see Stefan Schorch, “The Samaritan Version of Deuteronomy and the Origin of Deuteronomy,” in *Samaria, Samaritans, Samaritans: Studies on Bible, History and Linguistics* (ed. József Zsengellér; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 26–28; Gary N. Knoppers, “Samaritan Conceptions of Jewish Origins and Jewish Conceptions of Samaritan Origins: Any Common Ground?,” in *Die Samaritaner und die Bibel: Historische und literarische Wechselwirkungen zwischen biblischen und samaritanischen Traditionen* (ed. Jörg Frey, Ursula Schattner-Rieser, and Konrad Schmid; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 87. The book of Deuteronomy as a whole seems to present Mount Gerizim as the chosen “place” of blessing, the dwelling of the name of Yahweh, and the altar of Yahweh (Deut 11:29–12:27; 27:12–13), although it apparently presents Mount Ebal as the location of the altar of Yahweh (Deut 27:4–8 MT; confirmed by Josh 8:30–35); cf. Detlef Jericke, “Der Berg Garizim im Deuteronomium,” *ZAW* 124 (2012): 219–227. In any case, both mountains are located in the region of the oaks of Moreh (Deut 11:30), and not in Jerusalem. The choice of Mount Gerizim, and not simply Shechem, for the location of a sanctuary is somewhat surprising; cf. Magnar Kartveit, “The Second Temple and the Temple of the Samaritans,” in Frey, Schattner-Rieser, and Schmid, *Die Samaritaner und die Bibel*, 73–75. However, this mountain could have been selected precisely because it had no significant previous cultic history, apart from the presence of the famous oak of Moreh in its region (Deut 11:30; Gen 12:6; cf. Judg 9:6, 37). Therefore, it could have been presented as the place freely chosen by Yahweh, and not by humans.

concerning the location of the unique altar of Yahweh²¹ by explicitly locating the oak of Moreh in the region of Shechem (Gen 12:6) and by allusively associating the "place" of offering a burnt sacrifice to Yahweh (Gen 22:2–3) with the Deuteronomic mountain of blessing, that is, Mount Gerizim (Deut 11:29–30). Accordingly, in the book of Genesis, the mountain and "place" of Moriah alludes to the Yahwistic sanctuary on Mount Gerizim.²²

Consequently, the narrative character of Abraham, who offered a burnt offering to Yahweh only on the altar located on Mount Moriah, that is, allusively, on the altar located on Mount Gerizim (Gen 22:1–14), again alludes to the person of Sanballat, who founded the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim and inaugurated the offering of burnt offerings to Yahweh in that place.

E RESPECT FOR THE JUDEAN PRIESTHOOD

In the Genesis narrative, having built the first altar in Canaan at Shechem (Gen 12:6–7), Abram went from that place towards the South (Gen 12:9; 13:18). In the opinion of Diana V. Edelman, Abram thus became "a neutral, common ancestor for the North and the South."²³ However, such a neutral image is possible as long as there is no other Israelite leader in the South, like Judah later became a rival to Joseph (Gen 37:26–27 etc.). The situation of Sanballat was similar to that of Abram. Nehemiah complains that when he came to seek the well-being of the sons of Israel, Sanballat the Haranite and Tobiah the Ammonite official heard of it, and it displeased them greatly (Neh 2:10). Accordingly, Sanballat had already been in the land of Israel before Nehemiah came to Jerusalem (cf. Neh 2:11). The confrontation between the two Israelite leaders and their claims to govern the sons of Israel is here evident. Before Nehemiah came to Jerusalem, Sanballat had been the only governor who sought "the well-being of the sons of Israel" (cf. Neh 2:10), presumably both in the North and in the South. When Nehemiah came, he perceived himself as likewise called "to seek the well-being of the sons of Israel" (Neh 2:10). Therefore, the image of

²¹ Cf. Gary N. Knoppers, "The Northern Context of the Law-Code in Deuteronomy," *HBAI* 4 (2015): 165–167. Frederick E. Greenspahn argues that the syntax of Deut 12 does not require that sacrifice be limited to a single place: idem, "Deuteronomy and Centralization," *VT* 64 (2014): 232–234. However, even if this is the case, Deuteronomy mentions only one altar, located in a single place, on one of the mountains in the region of Shechem (Deut 27:5–6; cf. 12:26–27; 16:21; 26:1–4; 33:10). Cf. also Bill T. Arnold, "Deuteronomy 12 and the Law of the Central Sanctuary *noch einmal*," *VT* 64 (2014): 236–48.

²² Luciano Lepore regards the identification of Moriah with Mount Gerizim as equally plausible as its identification with Jerusalem: idem, *Sulle orme dei patriarchi* (Bornato in Franciacorta: Sardini, 2018), 161.

²³ Cf. Edelman, "Genesis," 51.

Abram as coming to the land of Canaan and dwelling both in the North and in the South resembles the situation of Sanballat before the arrival of Nehemiah.

In the story of Abraham, the South is, however, not totally devoid of leaders who might be rivals to him. In another enigmatic story, Abram meets Melchizedek, king of Salem. The motif of Melchizedek, the king of Salem, bringing out (מלך שלם* מלך צדק* + יצא in *hiph'il*: Gen 14:18) is a reworking of the motif of Adonizedek, the king of Jerusalem, being brought out (Josh 10:1, 3, 23). Therefore, the enigmatic place named Salem in Gen 14:18 should be identified with Jerusalem.²⁴

The author of Genesis described the Israelite hero Abram as paying respect to a priest²⁵ and king from Salem, that is Jerusalem, as far as he was righteous, peaceful, monotheistic (although not invoking the name of Yahweh;²⁶ *contra* Judg 17:2, etc.),²⁷ and bringing food offerings (cf. Lev 23:13, etc.);²⁸ so not burnt animal offerings), which were not prohibited for him by Israel's law (Gen 14:18–20). Accordingly, in the Israelite (northern) rhetoric of Gen 14:18–20, the temple in Jerusalem, in contrast to Mount Moriah, that is, Mount Gerizim, with its legitimate altar of burnt offerings (cf. Gen 22:13), was treated similarly to the altar in Transjordan (cf. Josh 22:10–34) and to the temple at Elephantine, in which only food offerings and incense, but not burnt offerings, were allowed (cf. *COS* 3.52:9; 3.53:10–11; cf. also 3.51:21, 25).²⁹

Therefore, the image of Abram paying respect to a monotheistic priest from Salem, that is, Jerusalem (Gen 14:18–20), again alludes to the person of Sanballat, who received into his family as his son-in-law an important priest from Jerusalem, one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliashib the high priest in Jerusalem (Neh 13:28).

²⁴ The remark concerning Shalem/Shalom (שלם) in Gen 14:18 was explicitly interpreted as referring to Jerusalem in later Judean texts (Ps 76:3 MT; 110:2–4; 1QapGen XXII, 13). Cf. Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 151, 154.

²⁵ Cf. Moshe Reiss, "The Melchizedek Traditions," *SJOT* 26 (2012): 260.

²⁶ Cf. the similar use of the motif of God Most High (אל + עליון) placed in the mouth of the non-Israelite Balaam (Num 24:16).

²⁷ Cf. Mathews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26*, 149–150.

²⁸ David Elgavish has argued that the story of the Gibeonites (Josh 9:12–14) presents bread and wine as important elements for concluding a treaty: idem, "The Encounter of Abram and Melchizedek King of Salem: A Covenant Establishing Ceremony," in *Studies in the Book of Genesis: Literature, Redaction and History* (ed. André Wénin; Leuven: Leuven University Press; Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 498–499. Although this story mentions bread and wine, it does not refer to them as necessary for establishing a covenant.

²⁹ For this important cultic-legal difference between the sanctuaries on Mt. Gerizim and at Elephantine, see Edelman, "Genesis," 56; Dušek, "Mt. Gerizim," 118 n. 32.

F ORIGIN AND DATE OF GENESIS

It can therefore be demonstrated that several important features of the narrative character of Abraham allude to the features of the historical person of Sanballat. The detected links are of great importance to the issues of the origin, dating, and interpretation of the book of Genesis. In contrast to the widespread opinion concerning the Jewish origin of the Torah, the above-presented arguments suggest that the origins of Genesis can be traced not to Judea but to the secular elite of the Persian province of Samaria.

Besides, since the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim seems to have been founded by Sanballat ca. 424–407 B.C.,³⁰ then late fifth century B.C. constitutes the plausible *terminus a quo* for the composition of Genesis. More particularly, since the Genesis story of the Israelite patriarchs (Gen 12–50) covers four generations, and the character of Abraham displays significant features of Sanballat, then, the importance of the fourth-generation Joseph (Gen 37–50) points to the fourth generation after Sanballat, thus, to ca. 300 B.C., as the time of the composition of Genesis. However, if we do not count the patriarchs' generations in abstract terms, but rather understand them as alluding to the sequence of the governors of the Persian province of Samaria, then, all four "generations" of the governors fall within the Persian period.³¹ It is possible that the narrative traits of the Genesis characters of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph also allude to the particular features of the governors of Samaria after Sanballat (Delaiah etc.), but alas, we have almost no detailed historical information concerning these officials. In any case, the allusive significance of not only the character of Abraham but also, probably, the three generations of Israelite leaders after him implies that Genesis was written not in late fifth century B.C. but by the end of the Persian period, thus, ca. 350–340 B.C.

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³⁰ Dušek, "Mt. Gerizim," 114–116.

³¹ Cf. Menahem Mor, "The Building of the Samaritan Temple and the Samaritan Governors – Again," in *Samaria, Samaritans, Samaritans: Studies on Bible, History and Linguistics*. (SJ 66/Studia Samaritana 6; ed. József Zsengellér; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 105.

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Assoc. Prof. Bartosz Adamczewski, Faculty of Theology, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Dewajtis 5, PL-01-815 Warsaw, Poland.
Email: b.adamczewski@ukw.edu.pl. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7847-0203>.