

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SAMARITAN RELIGION AT MT. GERIZIM

Intermarriage with non-believers (non-Jews) was an ongoing problem during the time of Ezra & Nehemiah.

457 It was a major concern of Ezra (Ezra 9-10)

444 Nehemiah specifically cited the avoiding of religious inter-marriage in his renewal of the covenant during the wall dedication ceremony (Nehemiah 10:28, 30; 13:1-3)

420's? After returning to the Persian royal court in 433, Nehemiah later returned to Judea only to find that High Priest Eliashib had permitted Tobiah the Ammonite (to whom he was related by marriage) to use a temple storeroom as his Jerusalem residence; that the Laws regarding tithing & the Sabbath rest were being totally ignored; that many Jews had once again married non-Jews & were raising children who couldn't even understand Biblical Hebrew; Nehemiah aggressively fixed all these problems (Nehemiah 13:4ff)

Nehemiah also chased off an unnamed grandson of High Priest Eliashib because he had married the daughter of Sanballat of Samaria (Nehemiah 13:28-29)¹

The book of Malachi was probably written during this backslidden period

The High Priesthood became a contested position of authority during the late Persian period (later 4th Century BC)

c. 342 Bagoas, who was technically second-in-command under King Artaxerxes III (reigned 358-338 BC), was actually the real power behind the throne, particularly after he was instrumental in securing Egypt for the Persian Empire; shortly thereafter he promised the High Priesthood to a Jewish friend named Joshua (a grandson of Eliashib); when Joshua tried to take control from his brother, Johanan, the incumbent High Priest killed the challenger during an argument in the Temple; Bagoas personally entered the Temple, desecrating it (as a Gentile), and subsequently punished the Jews by fining them 50 shekels for each of the two lambs sacrificed daily² under Johanan's authority as High Priest for the next seven years (Antiquities of the Jews 11.8.1)

338 When his influence over the Persian king began to wane, Bagoas poisoned Artaxerxes III (c. age 87), permitting the youngest son, Artaxerxes IV, to come to power as his new puppet

336 When Artaxerxes IV later tried to kill Bagoas, Bagoas poisoned him also, permitting a cousin, Darius III (44 ys), to become what would be the final King of the Persian Empire

Darius III sent a man named Sanballat into the Samaria/Judea region to represent Persian interests there; Sanballat immediately married his daughter to Manasseh, brother of Jaddua, the new Jewish High Priest, as part of an alliance with Judea (Antiquities 11.7.2)

[SPECIAL NOTE: The Jews of Egypt appealed to Bagoas, Sanballat & the former High Priest Johanan for assistance in rebuilding a Jewish Temple on the Nile island of Elephantine (probably built around the same time as the 2nd Temple, early in the Persian period), which had been recently damaged during anti-Jewish riots. This may explain why a Jewish Temple was already on Sanballat's mind the following year.]

King Philip of Macedon was assassinated in October, possibly with some involvement of Bagoas; His son, Alexander (20 yrs), become King of Macedon; [Alexander spent the next two years bringing his father's Grecian Empire under his own control (Antiquities 11.8.1)]

When Bagoas saw that Darius III was not acting as his puppet, he tried to poison him as well; Darius learned of the plot and forced Bagoas to drink the poison himself

¹ I discovered the hard way that this story can be very easily confused with an extraordinarily similar one just a few generations later.

² Approximately \$1,270 per day, at today's market value of silver

Sanballat of Samaria made his son-in-law, Manasseh, the first High Priest of the Samaritan religion

- 335** Because devout Jews were calling for his removal from the priesthood, Manasseh considered divorcing Sanballat's daughter; his father-in-law promised to intercede with Darius III in order to make Manasseh the High Priest of Samaria, to build him a Temple (a replica of the one in Jerusalem) on Mt. Gerizim (near Shechem) & to designate him as the next Persian ruler of the region after his own death; Manasseh accepted, taking with him many other priests who were also involved in illegal (non-Israeli) marriages (Antiquities 11.8.2)

Alexander the Great radically changed the culture of the Middle East

- 334** In the spring, Alexander (22 yrs) crossed the Hellespont, invading the Persian Empire (Antiquities 11.8.1)
- 333** In November, Alexander defeated Darius III at the Battle of Issus – NE corner of the Med (Antiquities 11.8.2)
- 332** Alexander besieged the island of Tyre, building a causeway to its walls; he requested troops from the Jewish High Priest Jaddua, but was refused due to a previous oath to Darius III; Alexander vowed to avenge himself on the High Priest (Antiquities 11.8.3)

Sanballat promised his allegiance to Alexander in exchange for Manasseh's High Priesthood & the building of the replica Temple on Mt. Gerizim (at Shechem); Alexander agreed (Antiquities 11.8.3);

Alexander finished the destruction of Tyre's walls – begun by Nebuchadnezzar – just as prophesied in Ezekiel 26.

When Alexander advanced on Jerusalem to punish the High Priest for disobedience, things went altogether differently than what Alexander's companions had thought; Jaddua voluntarily came out to meet Alexander, dressed in his high priestly garments; upon seeing him, Alexander recognized him from a vision he'd had in Macedonian a few years earlier, in which a divine being had promised to give him dominion of the Persian Empire; Alexander subsequently honored Yahweh with sacrifices, read about himself in the book of Daniel (probably Daniel 8:1-8, but could have also been 7:6, as well), and declared that Jews everywhere in his empire should be able to adhere to their unique laws regardless of their impact upon Macedonian law (Antiquities 11.8.5)

When the Samaritans tried to get special treatment similar to that of the Jews, Alexander tabled the matter since the Samaritans admitted that they were themselves not fully Jewish (Antiquities 11.8.6)

- 331** After liberating Egypt from Persian rule, Alexander (25 yrs) invaded & conquered Babylonia
- 330** Darius III was assassinated by one of his own men, marking the end of the Persian Empire
- 324** Alexander (31 yrs) pushed his empire as far east as NW India before heading back to Mesopotamia
- 323** Alexander died at age 32 in Nebuchadnezzar's palace in Mesopotamia; his body was to be shipped back to Macedonia, but was instead diverted to Egypt, where it was eventually placed in a tomb at Alexandria

During the 320's & thereafter

“Now when Alexander was dead, the government was parted among his successors; but the temple upon Mount Gerizim remained; and if anyone were accused by those of Jerusalem of having eaten things common, or of having broken the Sabbath, or of any other crime of the like nature, he fled away to the Shechemites, and said that he was accused unjustly. About this time it was that Jaddua the high priest died, and Onias his son took the high priesthood. This was the state of the affairs of the people of Jerusalem at this time.”

Antiquities 11.8.7