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Reconsidering the Identity of Pseudo-Eupolemus: Mount Gerizim and Cult Centralization in Hellenistic Palestine

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Abstract

The Greek fragments conventionally known as Pseudo-Eupolemus, preserved by Eusebius via Alexander Polyhistor, offer a striking Hellenistic rewriting of the Abraham traditions, weaving together biblical narrative, mythographic genealogy, antediluvian wisdom, and accounts of the transmission of culture. Since Freudenthal, these fragments have generally been ascribed to a Samaritan author, primarily because one fragment includes an account of Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek on Mount Gerizim. The present article reassesses this attribution in light of recent work on Hellenistic Palestine, Samaritan origins, Mount Gerizim, and the pre-Samaritan textual tradition. It argues that the criteria customarily invoked in support of Samaritan identification—syncretism, “Phoenician patriotism”, the form Ἀργαριζίν, and the favorable reference to Mount Gerizim—are less decisive than has commonly been assumed. Read against the fluid Yahwistic landscape of pre-Hasmonean Palestine, these features need not presuppose a hardened Judean–Samaritan divide. The article accordingly contends that a Judean-Hellenistic author, distinct from Eupolemus himself, should be considered as a serious historical possibility.

Keywords: Pseudo-Eupolemus; Samaritans; Mount Gerizim; Judean identity; Yahwistic communities; Hellenistic Jewish historiography; Genesis 6:1–4; giants; Second Temple Judaism

1. Introduction

Alexander Polyhistor, a Greek scholar active in Rome during the first century BCE, compiled a range of writings concerning the Jews.¹ Several centuries later, Eusebius of Caesarea drew extensively on this collection in his *Praeparatio evangelica*. Eusebius preserves two passages in close succession: one (Praep. ev. 9.17.2–9) is ascribed to Eupolemus, the other transmitted anonymously (Praep. ev. 9.18.2). The two passages overlap substantially in their central motifs but diverge markedly from the remainder of the material attributed to Eupolemus. This observation has given rise to the scholarly hypothesis that they preserve the remnants of a single composition, written by an author active in the first half of the second century BCE and conventionally designated Pseudo-Eupolemus.²

A century and a half after Jacob Freudenthal coined the name “Pseudo-Eupolemus” and identified the author as Samaritan, this identification has, with only a few skeptical exceptions, come to be treated as nearly settled (Freudenthal 1875, p. 92). Robert Doran mounted the most substantial challenge to this consensus by identifying Pseudo-Eupolemus with Eupolemus himself, though his proposal has not been widely accepted (Doran 1987, pp. 270–74). Other scholars have voiced reservations regarding either the identification itself or the criteria adduced in support of it, but without developing a full



Academic Editor: Golda Akhiezer

Received: 22 May 2026

Revised: 25 June 2026

Accepted: 18 July 2026

Published: 22 July 2026

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alternative account. Despite the major developments that have since taken place in the study of Hellenistic Palestine and in Samaritan studies, the evidentiary basis for this attribution has not been subjected to systematic reexamination.

I do not argue that a Samaritan identification is impossible. The argument is, rather, that the evidence customarily adduced in its favor is less decisive than has commonly been assumed, and that a fresh examination of the textual, historical, and archaeological record opens the possibility of a Judean author, distinct from Eupolemus himself, as a serious alternative.

What is at stake in this question is more than the attribution of a single fragmentary work. Reassessing the identity of Pseudo-Eupolemus bears on how it is situated within Hellenistic Jewish and Samaritan literature, how its reference to Mount Gerizim is to be interpreted, and how its distinctive combination of biblical, Near Eastern, and Greek mythographic traditions is to be understood. More broadly, Pseudo-Eupolemus offers a productive test case for the methodological problem of assigning ethnic or religious provenance to fragmentary Hellenistic texts preserved only through later intermediaries. The question of the work's Samaritan or Judean character thus opens a narrow but significant window onto the religious and intellectual milieu in which Yahwistic identities were taking shape in Hellenistic Palestine during the first half of the second century BCE: the relations between Judeans and Samaritans, the competition among traditions, the status of cultic centers, and the contest for cultural prestige on the eve of the Hasmonean Revolt.

The argument proceeds by cumulative reassessment rather than by appeal to a single decisive criterion. I first address the corpus question and the relationship between the two fragments, since the attribution problem cannot be separated from the question of what material is actually under discussion. I then reassess the principal arguments that scholarship has advanced for identifying the author as Samaritan: syncretism, the alleged “Phoenician” orientation of the text, the form Ἀργαρίζιν, and the reference to Mount Gerizim. The purpose of this reassessment is both negative and constructive: to ask whether these features genuinely require Samaritan provenance, and whether they can also be accounted for within a Judean-Hellenistic setting. I then examine the distribution of the major motifs embedded in the composition, especially the survival of the giants and the transmission of antediluvian wisdom, in order to determine whether they point to a specifically Samaritan context or to a broader Jewish exegetical field. Finally, I treat separately the question of whether Fragment 1 should be identified with the work of Eupolemus himself.

2. The Text and the Two Fragments

The Greek text of the two fragments is given in Appendix A. Fragment 1 presents five episodes from the life of Abraham. The first opens with his birth in the city of Babylon, founded by the survivors of the flood, who are identified as giants and the builders of the tower. After the tower falls by divine action, the giants are scattered throughout the earth (Praep. ev. 9.17.2–3). Abraham is then said to have excelled in astrology and to have migrated to Phoenicia, where he conveyed astrological knowledge to the Phoenicians (Praep. ev. 9.17.4a). The third episode summarizes the narrative of Genesis 14: Abraham rescues Lot and, on his return, is hosted by Melchizedek “by the temple Argarizin of the city” (Praep. ev. 9.17.4b–6a).³ The fourth episode recounts the story of Sarah and Pharaoh during Abraham's descent to Egypt, in parallel with Gen 12:10–20 (Praep. ev. 9.17.6b–7). The fifth and final episode recounts Abraham's contribution to the learning of the Egyptian priests at Heliopolis. The fragment concludes with a genealogical excursus on the discovery of astrology by Enoch and its subsequent transmission to Abraham (Praep. ev. 9.17.8–9).

Fragment 2 is considerably more concise and appears to summarize elements also found in Fragment 1, chiefly Abraham's Babylonian origin and his journey to Phoenicia

and Egypt. Yet it also carries distinctive emphases of its own, most notably a more explicit formulation identifying Abraham as a descendant of the giants and naming Belus as the builder of the tower.

3. History of Scholarship

Jacob Freudenthal was the first to argue explicitly that Fragment 1 does not belong to the work of the Judean Eupolemus but reflects a different composition, more syncretistic in character and bearing Samaritan affinities (Freudenthal 1875, pp. 91–92). His proposal rested on the unusual location of Abraham’s encounter with Melchizedek at the “temple of Mount Gerizim” and on the fragment’s glorification of Abraham as a culture hero and fount of wisdom—in contrast to the tendency of the fragments attributed to Eupolemus to magnify Moses and the temple in Jerusalem (Freudenthal 1875, pp. 96, 98–99, 101). The designation Pseudo-Eupolemus follows from this claim: although the passage was transmitted under Eupolemus’s name, its inferred author was not Eupolemus himself. Ben Zion Wacholder reinforced Freudenthal’s framework through a comprehensive philological analysis of the fragment’s text, style, and genre, while emphasizing the combination of euhemeristic and syncretistic elements as characteristic of a more open form of Hellenistic historiography. He construed the Gerizim connection as conferring priority and authority on a cultic center other than the Jerusalem temple.

Wacholder also helped shape the now common placement of Pseudo-Eupolemus within a broad second-century BCE horizon, most plausibly in its earlier or middle decades. This chronological frame is adopted in what follows on the basis of considerations that do not depend on the attribution of Samaritan provenance. The *terminus post quem* is supplied by the fragment’s probable use of Berossus and by its use of the Greek Pentateuch; the outer *terminus ante quem* is supplied by Alexander Polyhistor’s preservation of the material, and may be narrowed further if the relevant section of Sib. Or. 3 depends on Pseudo-Eupolemus.⁴ Within this range, the composition’s Babylonian and Phoenician orientation, together with its subordination of Egypt in the transmission of culture and wisdom, fits especially well in the early or middle decades of the second century BCE, against the background of Seleucid-Ptolemaic competition over Coele-Syria.⁵ These considerations do not establish a precise date, but they are sufficient for the broad chronological framework required by the present argument.

Nikolaus Walter adopted a more cautious set of working assumptions and shifted the discussion to the relationship between the fragments, allowing for the possibility that their overlap derives from a shared tradition rather than necessarily reflecting a single composition (Walter 1965, pp. 282–90). Doran extended this line of criticism, arguing that the differences between the two passages are too substantial to warrant imposing literary unity upon them. With regard to the author’s identity, Doran examined and rejected the arguments for Samaritan identification, concluding that the material in Fragment 1 belongs to Eupolemus’s own work (Doran 1987, pp. 270–74). Erich Gruen likewise expressed skepticism, declining to treat the Samaritan identification as self-evident. In his view, the reference to Mount Gerizim need not require identifying the author as Samaritan, and the evidence for identifying Pseudo-Eupolemus is less secure than is commonly assumed (Gruen 1998, p. 147). Reinhard Pummer’s reservations point in a similar direction: his concern lay less with this particular attribution than with the broader methodological criteria by which Samaritan identification has been inferred (Pummer 2009, p. 8 n. 28).

Gregory Sterling reframed the question in terms of genre and cultural strategy, situating Pseudo-Eupolemus within his broader account of Hellenistic apologetic historiography and the construction of identity through Hellenization. For Sterling, the fragments exemplify a mode of historical writing that legitimates a local group identity and tradition

by inscribing them within a universal Hellenistic horizon (Sterling 1992, pp. 7, 19). In the same context he treats the Samaritan attribution as probable, grounding it not only in the reference to Mount Gerizim but also in the text's consistent preference for Phoenicia over Egypt (Sterling 1992, pp. 187–88, 205–6; 2013, p. 706).

In recent decades, scholarship has focused less on the author's identity than on the text's place within broader debates over the survival of the giants after the flood. Scholars have explored the apparently polemical relationship between this tradition and the contrary tradition, according to which the giants did not survive the flood, attested—among other texts—in the Book of Watchers and the Book of Giants, as competing options within the broader intellectual milieu of the period (Stuckenbruck 2000, pp. 368–69).⁶

Nearly four decades have passed since Doran's attempt to challenge the prevailing consensus concerning the Samaritan identity of Pseudo-Eupolemus, and despite significant developments in the study of Hellenistic Palestine and in Samaritan studies, no systematic study has yet reexamined the question. The contribution of the present article therefore lies not in isolating a single new criterion for provenance, but in bringing together a set of scattered objections and recent developments that have not yet been integrated into a sustained reassessment of the Samaritan attribution. Its aim is to clarify what follows when the Gerizim reference, the “Phoenician” terminology, the mythographic material, the giant traditions, and the evidence for pre-Hasmonean Yahwistic overlap are considered together rather than as isolated data points.

4. The Corpus Question: One Fragment, Two Fragments, or Related Traditions?

Any inquiry into the author's identity must first address the corpus question: are the two fragments to be ascribed to a single author, or do they reflect two distinct authors or traditions?

Walter, who first proposed separating the fragments, argued that the first half of Fragment 2 should be regarded as a summary composed by Alexander Polyhistor from a Babylonian-Hellenistic tradition rather than as part of Pseudo-Eupolemus. He further suggested that Polyhistor's introduction—according to which Abraham's genealogy derived from the giants—appears to rest on a misunderstanding (Walter 1965, p. 284 n. 5). Walter's assumption that Polyhistor himself composed an independent summary is problematic, since Polyhistor, as preserved by Eusebius, indicates that the text was the work of an anonymous author. The burden of proof therefore rests on anyone who would attribute to Polyhistor an independent summary running counter to his own presentation of the material.⁷

A comparison of the two fragments indicates that in Fragment 1 the city of Babylon was built “by those who had come safely through the flood. They were Giants” (ὕπὸ τῶν διασωθέντων ἐκ τοῦ κατακλυσμοῦ· εἶναι δὲ αὐτοὺς γίγαντας), and the text gives no indication of any other group of survivors. The identification of the survivors of the flood with the giants is established chiefly through the clause εἶναι δὲ αὐτοὺς γίγαντας, in which the pronoun αὐτοὺς refers back to τῶν διασωθέντων, while γίγαντας functions as the predicate: the survivors of the flood are the giants, who were scattered throughout the whole earth when the tower fell. Abraham, born in the tenth generation in Camarine, a city of Babylonia, is thus implicitly a descendant of those same giants, survivors of the flood and builders of the tower, as emerges more directly in Fragment 2.

If Walter's argument is to be rejected on this first point, a second difference between the fragments is harder to reconcile: the identity and function of Belus in the narrative (Doran 1987, pp. 270–71). Fragment 1 reads: “the Babylonians say that Belus was the first, who is Kronos; that from him Belis and Cham were born; and this one [i.e., Cham] begot Chanaan, the father of the Phoenicians”. Fragment 2 reads: “that these, living in Babylonia, were killed

by the gods because of their ungodliness; that one of them, Belos, escaping death, had settled in Babylon, and lived in a tower that he had built, named Belos after the Belos who had built it". The narrative divergence here is substantial. In Fragment 1, Belos parallels the biblical Noah, though he is not a survivor of the flood but rather "the first"; his descendants Belus and Cham parallel Shem and Ham, the sons of Noah. Fragment 2, by contrast, identifies Belus himself as the builder of the tower, whereas in Fragment 1 the giants are its builders (Wacholder 1963, pp. 91, 94). The etymology that the author of Fragment 2 supplies for the name of the tower is an addition not found in Fragment 1, as is the explanation that the giants were destroyed by the gods "because of their ungodliness". As Doran has noted, the order of events in the two fragments also differs (Sterling 2013, p. 712; Doran 1987, p. 270).

The relationship between the two fragments is therefore not straightforward. The foregoing analysis accords with the now widely accepted view that the two fragments should not be treated as the work of a single authorial hand. What remains open is the precise nature of their relationship: Fragment 2 may be a summary of Fragment 1, a reworking of the same tradition, or evidence of a related yet distinct tradition.⁸ The present discussion, however, does not seek to settle the relationship between the two fragments but to examine the identity of the author of Fragment 1. For this purpose, one must rely first and foremost on Fragment 1 itself, since, as will be shown below, the main argument for Samaritan authorship is the reference to the temple on Mount Gerizim, which appears only there. Because the chronological and tradition-historical status of Fragment 2 in relation to Fragment 1 remains unclear, drawing on it to determine the author's identity would be methodologically unsound. It cannot, therefore, serve as the basis for identifying Pseudo-Eupolemus. In what follows, therefore, the designation "Pseudo-Eupolemus" refers primarily to the author of Fragment 1.

5. The Samaritan Identification Reconsidered

Having clarified the boundaries of the corpus, we may now turn to the question of identity, and in particular to the arguments for identifying Pseudo-Eupolemus as a Samaritan author. I first set out the principal arguments commonly invoked in support of this identification and then reassess each in turn. The first two subsections argue that the indicators customarily taken to support Samaritan identification are not decisive.

The third subsection develops the constructive part of the argument: it asks not only whether the Gerizim reference fails to prove Samaritan provenance, but also whether the historical setting of pre-Hasmonean Palestine also makes a Judean-Hellenistic attribution plausible. The fourth subsection examines the distribution of the motifs attested in the composition. This material is not treated as an independent criterion for provenance, since the absence of securely Samaritan literature from this period prevents any symmetrical comparison. It nevertheless strengthens the cumulative argument by showing that the composition's major motifs can be situated within extant Jewish exegetical and tradition-historical contexts.

5.1. Syncretism, Euhemerism, and Cultural Appropriation

Early scholarship gave considerable weight to the argument from syncretism in the discussion of the identity of Pseudo-Eupolemus's author. There is, however, no firm evidentiary basis for the assumption that Samaritans were more inclined than Judeans toward syncretistic forms of religion. As I argue below, the association of Samaritans with a supposed tendency toward syncretism is anachronistic and has been shaped, in no small measure, by later polemical traditions.⁹ Nevertheless, engagement with the question of syncretism helps to clarify important aspects of the theological and cultural setting within

which Judean authors wrote during this period, and it allows us to assess how the intellectual world of the composition under discussion fits within that setting.

Freudenthal argued that the combination of mythological elements in the genealogical description of Abraham in Fragment 1—Kronos, Belus, and Atlas—reflects a theological reality in which Samaritans tended toward polytheism more than Judeans did. He presents this as characteristic of Samaritan religion, writing: “In this genealogical passage the height of syncretistic confusion is reached. Babylonian, Hellenic, and Hebrew traditions are mixed together in a way that has no second example in Jewish-Hellenistic literature. But this, like all similar features that we have found earlier in the Samaritan, fully accords with the character of the people to which he belongs. Having arisen from a mixture of Assyrian-Babylonian, Median-Persian, Syrian-Phoenician, and Israelite elements, they glance now toward the Jews and now toward the gentiles” (Freudenthal 1875, p. 96).¹⁰

Wacholder had already rejected Freudenthal’s use of this argument for determining whether the author was Samaritan, and he disagreed with him concerning the purpose of the syncretism (Wacholder 1963, pp. 87, 104–5). He did not take the text to be tending toward polytheism; rather, he identified radical syncretistic elements whose aim is to weave Babylonian and Greek mythology into the account of biblical history, as part of a literary effort to integrate the traditions of Genesis with those of Mediterranean culture (Wacholder 1963, pp. 88, 99, 112). Wacholder showed that Pseudo-Eupolemus deploys these mythological elements as a euhemeristic apologetic device—a means of demonstrating the superiority of the biblical account and the inferiority of pagan tradition (Wacholder 1963, pp. 91, 93–94). By reducing Kronos and Belus to ordinary mortals, he undermines the foundations of polytheistic belief itself. Likewise, Wacholder argues, when Pseudo-Eupolemus identifies Atlas with Enoch, he does so in order to refute indirectly the Greek claim that Atlas invented astrology: Atlas is merely a pagan name for Enoch. The text thereby presents the biblical patriarchs as the true and original source of the sciences (Wacholder 1963, p. 96).

Gruen rejects in principle the use of the term “syncretism” to describe cultural relations between Judaism and Hellenism. In his view, the assumption that what is at stake is a fusion of Judean and pagan beliefs and practices misconstrues the historical process, since it rests on a misleading dichotomy between assimilation and resistance, and between fidelity to tradition and religious compromise (Gruen 1998, p. xv). He proposes instead that Judean-Hellenistic authors be understood as creative figures who operated from within a Judean identity that was not dissolved into the surrounding Hellenic culture, but sought to articulate its own distinctiveness within it (Gruen 1998, p. xv). Gruen rejects the model according to which the dynamic of cultural encounter was passive or submissive on the Judean side vis-à-vis Greek culture. It was, rather, a dynamic of active engagement: Judean authors appropriated Greek genres, recast traditions and legends, and rewrote their past through Hellenic literary means in order to give expression to their own heritage (Gruen 1998, pp. xv–xvi).

John Collins develops a similar line of argument. On his view, Judean Yahwistic religion and Hellenism were not competing systems incapable of coexistence. He maintains that it is mistaken to suppose that Hellenization necessarily entailed damage to Judean traditions or an erosion of Judean Yahwistic belief, since Judeans at this stage did not face a dichotomous choice between assimilation and resistance (Collins 2001, p. 38). Collins emphasizes that one should not speak of the wholesale acceptance or rejection of Hellenistic culture, but should distinguish between its different domains: the adoption of the Greek language, or of Hellenistic literary and architectural styles, did not in itself threaten the Judean way of life. In Gruen’s terms, this is not syncretism but cultural appropriation (Collins 2001, pp. 38–39; Gruen 1998, p. 159).

This perspective is evident in Gruen’s treatment of authors such as Pseudo-Eupolemus, Artapanus, and Aristobulus. In his discussion of Pseudo-Eupolemus, he emphasizes that

Abraham is placed at the center as the one who brings culture and learning to the peoples of the Near East and indirectly even to Greece, while all this is subordinated to Abraham's own intellectual achievement—a move that would have strengthened a Jewish audience's sense of cultural superiority (Gruen 1998, p. 150).¹¹ Gruen, and to a considerable extent Collins as well, do not describe Hellenistic Jewish literature as a surrender of identity, but as a creative act of self-definition, in which Judeans used the prestige of Hellenic culture in order to claim the antiquity, superiority, and centrality of their own heritage.¹²

Doran observes that a comparable form of “syncretism” also appears in the fragments attributed to Eupolemus: Eupolemus claims that Moses gave writing to the Phoenicians, from whom it passed to the Greeks, and credits King Solomon with the erection of the golden pillar in the temple of Zeus at Tyre (Doran 1987, p. 273). Doran adduces this in support of his conclusion that Eupolemus is also the author of Fragment 1, a conclusion that will be rejected below. Yet the observation itself has merit insofar as it points to at least one other Judean author who employs a similar form of “syncretism”.

In sum, the very presence of syncretism in the text is open to question, and so too—insofar as it can be identified—is its purpose. Nor is there evidence that Samaritans inclined toward syncretism more than Judeans; the perception itself is anachronistic, shaped by biblical and extrabiblical writings produced in the course of the polemic against the Samaritans. The argument from syncretism therefore cannot bear the evidentiary weight that has been placed on it, and the question of identity remains open.

5.2. *Phoenicia and the Problem of “Phoenician Patriotism”*

Freudenthal detected a Phoenician orientation in Pseudo-Eupolemus and treated it as one of the central considerations supporting a Samaritan attribution. In his view, the author's identification of the Canaanites with the Phoenicians—and indeed the extension of this identification to figures and places not so identified in the biblical text—does not accord with the plain sense of the biblical narrative but sits comfortably with the author's Samaritan origin. Accordingly, he argues that the portrayal of Abraham as one who makes contact with the Phoenicians, teaches them the sciences, and even provides them with assistance and protection reflects an ethnic and cultural affinity with the Phoenician world. Freudenthal links this affinity to the mixed composition of the Samaritan people and to supposed Samaritan claims of Phoenician origin (Freudenthal 1875, pp. 96–97).

Wacholder partly accepts this line of reasoning but reformulates it within a broader historical framework. He argues that the substitution of “Phoenicia” for “Canaan” in Pseudo-Eupolemus—and especially the notion that God promised Abraham Phoenicia rather than Canaan—is very difficult to reconcile with a Jerusalemite Judean point of view. He proposes a more concrete ethnic-cultural possibility: that Pseudo-Eupolemus may have been a Hellenistic Samaritan. On this footing, he suggests that “Phoenician patriotism”, as he terms it, may account not only for the identification of Canaan with Phoenicia but also for the preference for Babylon and Phoenicia over Egypt and for the glorification of the Phoenician sphere in the composition (Wacholder 1963, pp. 104–5).

The evidence supports neither the claim that the substitution of Phoenicia for Canaan points to Samaritan identity nor the related notion of “Phoenician patriotism”, on which Pseudo-Eupolemus is taken to privilege Phoenicia and Babylon over Egypt (Wacholder 1963, pp. 96, 104). Already in the Judean-Hellenistic Eupolemus, the Phoenician sphere is deeply integrated into rewritten biblical historiography. Hiram is not merely king of Tyre but “king of Tyre, Sidon, and Phoenicia” (Praep. ev. 9.30.4), an expansion that serves to magnify Solomon's status (Gruen 1998, p. 144; Doran 1987, pp. 266, 268). A further tradition in Eupolemus (Praep. ev. 9.26.1) holds that writing passed from Moses to the Jews, from them to

the Phoenicians, and from them to the Greeks. Moreover, the Septuagint itself occasionally renders Canaan as Φοινίκη (Wacholder 1963, p. 103).¹³

Josephine Quinn provides important methodological support for this conclusion. The evidence, in her view, indicates that—unlike names such as “Sidon”—Phoenicia was not the designation of an ancient and well-defined ethnic collective but an external Greek category. There is no good evidence that those whom we call Phoenicians understood themselves as a unified supra-urban collective; rather, they identified themselves by city, family, and, at most, region (Quinn 2017, pp. 18–22, 30, 37–38). In the Greek and Roman sources themselves, the term “Phoenicians” often functions as a rather loose label, denoting primarily linguistic, cultural, or geographical distinctions rather than a distinct people in the full sense (Quinn 2017, pp. 45, 59–60; Amitay 2011, p. 263 n. 16). Taken together, these considerations support the conclusion that the term “Phoenicia” could just as readily appear in a Judean-Hellenistic composition without serving as a marker of Samaritan identity.

From a historiographical and narrative standpoint as well, even granting that Pseudo-Eupolemus evinces a preference for Phoenicia over Egypt, this need not amount to Phoenician patriotism. It may instead reflect a recognized position within a broader Hellenistic debate concerning the cultural priority of Egypt and Phoenicia, particularly in connection with the invention of writing and the alphabet (Doran 1987, p. 272). Hecataeus of Miletus (FGrH 1 F 20) attributed the invention of writing to Egypt; Herodotus (Hist. 5.58.1), as well as Philo of Byblos in the name of Sanchuniathon, located it, like Eupolemus, in Phoenicia (Praep. ev. 1.10).¹⁴

Pseudo-Eupolemus may therefore align with the Phoenician side of this debate. At most, such an alignment may indicate a general Hellenistic Palestinian or Syro-Phoenician literary milieu—one that could just as readily accommodate a Judean author.¹⁵

5.3. Mount Gerizim and the Limits of Samaritan Identification

5.3.1. Salem, Argarizin, and the Toponymic Evidence

Unlike the two preceding subsections, the discussion of Mount Gerizim does more than reassess an indicator previously used to establish Samaritan identification: it also asks whether the historical and textual evidence permits a Judean attribution. With due caution, I argue that it does, and that the reference to Mount Gerizim need not require identifying the author as Samaritan.

The text reports that Abraham was received by the city as a guest at the temple “Argarizin” (ἱερὸν Ἀργαρίζιν), whose literal meaning, according to the author, is “Mountain of the Most High” (ὄρος ὑψίστου). There he receives gifts from Melchizedek, king and priest of God Most High, in keeping with Gen 14:18: “And King Melchizedek of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was priest of God Most High”. The implication of this description is that the author locates biblical Salem, Melchizedek’s city, in the region of Shechem and Mount Gerizim—the Samaritan cultic center that supposedly stood in deep rivalry with the Judean temple in Jerusalem. Freudenthal considered it impossible that a Judean author would transfer the tradition of Melchizedek’s sanctity from Jerusalem to the rival Samaritan cultic center and designate Mount Gerizim the “Mountain of the Most High” (Freudenthal 1875, p. 85; Wacholder 1963, pp. 106–7). Doran rejects the assumption that only a Samaritan could have written such a description. On his reading, the interpretation of Argarizin as “Mountain of the Most High” may derive directly from Gen 14:18, where Melchizedek is called “priest of God Most High”. The author’s association of the divine title “Most High” in the verse with Mount Gerizim—the site near the city of Salem, where there did indeed stand an important central temple—is intelligible in its own terms (Doran 1987, pp. 272–73; cf. Gen 14:18 LXX).

The location of Salem in the region of Shechem may have been inferred from the ambiguous wording of Gen 33:18. In the Masoretic Text, שָׁלֵם עִירָא יַעֲקֹב וְיִבְא can be read adverbially, with שָׁלֵם meaning “safely” or “in peace”, as in the NRSVue: “Jacob came safely to the city of Shechem”. It can also, however, be read as a place name, “Salem”, yielding the sense that Jacob came “to Salem, a city of Shechem”. This latter reading is already reflected in the Septuagint, καὶ ἦλθεν Ἰακωβ εἰς Σαλημ πόλιν Σικίμων, and shows that the identification of Salem with the Shechem region was one possible ancient interpretation of the Hebrew text.

The name Salem also occurs as a place name in the Masoretic Text of Ps 76:3 [Eng. 76:2] in parallel with Zion: “His abode has been established in Salem, his dwelling place in Zion”.¹⁶ The Septuagint, by contrast, reads “καὶ ἐγενήθη ἐν εἰρήνῃ ὁ τόπος αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὸ κατοικητήριον αὐτοῦ ἐν Σιών”, rendering Salem as “peace”.¹⁷ Jubilees preserves both possibilities: “he went up to Salem, which is east of Shechem, in peace” (Jub 30:1) (Werman 2015, p. 407). The modern village of Sālim still lies on the slopes of the Kabir ridge, a short distance from Tell Balata—biblical Shechem. According to the archaeological evidence, the village was continuously inhabited from the tenth century BCE to the present, reaching its peak in the Hellenistic period, when it was the third- or fourth-largest settlement in the Shechem region, after Shechem itself and the settlement on Mount Gerizim (Campbell 1991, p. 112; see also Judith 4:4). It appears, then, that two distinct traditions for the location of Salem coexisted: one identified it with Jerusalem, the other situated it in the valley of Shechem. Given the size and prominence of the settlement in precisely this period, a Judean author could plausibly have located Salem in the valley of Shechem.¹⁸

Eupolemus (Praep. ev. 9.34.13) reports that the name Jerusalem derives from the name of Solomon’s temple. Doran argues that if Eupolemus held that the city’s name derived from Solomon, he can hardly have connected it with the biblical name “Salem” from the time of Abraham; he must therefore have located biblical Salem elsewhere. On this basis Doran concludes that locating Salem in Samaria is not a Samaritan claim but a direct consequence of Eupolemus’s own linguistic analysis (Doran 1987, pp. 272–73). Doran takes this conclusion to support the identification of Pseudo-Eupolemus with Eupolemus. A more plausible explanation, however, is simply that we are dealing with two Judean authors who prefer the parallel tradition noted above, which locates Salem in the valley of Shechem.

A further argument for Samaritan authorship concerns the author’s use of the toponym “Argarizin” (Ἀργαρίζιν). The argument holds that the compounded form Argarizin, as opposed to the separated form common in most manuscripts of the Septuagint (ὄρει Γαρίζιν, or Γαρίζιν alone), supports Samaritan identification (Kippenberg 1971, pp. 54–55; Pummer 1987, pp. 19–20). Yet this datum cannot by itself bear the weight placed upon it. Comparable formations are attested in the Septuagint, where the Hebrew word har, “mountain”, was transliterated into Greek and joined to the following proper name; the phenomenon also appears in texts with no Samaritan background. Thus, for example, the toponym “Mount Seir” is transliterated in Septuagint manuscripts in compounded forms such as ασσαρ or ασσαρης. In the Vetus Latina the compounded form Argarzim appears in 2 Maccabees (5:23; 6:2), and the Giessen papyri (Pap. Giessen) preserve the compounded form αργαρίζιμ (Pummer 1987, pp. 23–24).¹⁹ Similarly, the form γαργαρίζειν is preserved in the tenth-century Greek codex 127, which is not Samaritan (Pummer 1987, p. 25).²⁰ In light of this evidence, the use of the compound form Ἀργαρίζιν cannot by itself be taken as a marker of Samaritan identification.

5.3.2. Gerizim Traditions Beyond Samaritan Sectarian Boundaries

Recent scholarship has reassessed—and in some cases reclassified—biblical textual forms once treated as distinctively Samaritan. Two features in particular have received fresh attention: first, the perfect form בָּחַר (“has chosen”) in the Samaritan Pentateuch, as opposed to the imperfect יִבְחַר (“will choose”) in the Masoretic Text’s Deuteronomic centralization formula, “the place that the LORD your God will choose” (אֱלֹהֵיכֶם יִהְיֶה יִבְחַר אֲשֶׁר הַמָּקוֹם); and second, the Gerizim commandment itself. Scholars including Adrian Schenker, Edmon Gallagher, John Bergsma, Stefan Schorch, and Hila Dayfani have argued that these readings are not necessarily Samaritan innovations and may instead reflect broader pre-Samaritan or shared textual traditions.²¹

On the basis of a material reconstruction of the Qumran Exodus scroll 4QpaleoExod^m, Dayfani shows that this scroll, written in the paleo-Hebrew script and belonging to the early pre-Samaritan textual tradition, already contained the Gerizim commandment—including the command to build an altar on Mount Gerizim as one of the Ten Commandments (Dayfani 2022, pp. 679–88). Against the assumption that certain biblical texts belonged exclusively to sharply defined religious or sectarian groups in the last centuries BCE (Talmon 1964, pp. 95–132), the presence of a textual tradition of this kind in the Qumran library points, on Dayfani’s reading, to a more fluid and wider textual reality, integral to an early northern textual tradition (Dayfani 2022, p. 693).

Dayfani’s findings substantially weaken the assumption that Gerizim traditions served as exclusively Samaritan markers. More importantly, they situate these traditions within a broader textual landscape in which communal boundaries were less sharply drawn than is often assumed. A “pro-Gerizim” textual tradition—including the commandment to build an altar on Mount Gerizim—evidently circulated beyond Samaria, and may have been known not only in scribal circles associated with Qumran but also in wider Judean scribal circles during the last centuries BCE. The existence of such circles raises doubts about the assumption that a Judean author who located Abraham’s encounter with Melchizedek, priest of God Most High, at this site must have been Samaritan. At the very least, the evidence shows that during this period, there were textual and historical contexts in which a neutral—or even positive—attitude toward worship on Mount Gerizim had not yet hardened into a sharp Judean–Samaritan theological boundary.

5.3.3. Cult Centralization and the Pre-Hasmonean Yahwistic Landscape

Even if a Judean author of Fragment 1 did not know a textual form including the commandment to build an altar on Mount Gerizim, the question still arises how he could have acknowledged the temple there while affirming the exclusive legitimacy of the Jerusalem temple. The question itself, however, presupposes precisely what is at issue: that the exclusive cultic authority of Jerusalem was already widely assumed in early second-century BCE Judah. This is a presupposition that cannot be sustained without argument, as I argue in what follows.

This question must be situated within two closely related historical developments. The first concerns the textual formation of the Torah and the extent to which its cultic legislation had attained authoritative status in this period. The second concerns the shifting relationship between the two Yahwistic communities of Palestine—one centered in Judah, the other in Samaria—as their communal identities became more sharply differentiated over time. Only against this broader background can we assess whether a Judean author in the early second century BCE would have regarded the temple on Mount Gerizim as illegitimate.

Biblical historiography traces the roots of hostility toward the Samaritans back to the pre-exilic period (2 Kgs 17:24–41) (Kartveit 2019, p. 10).²² The narrative according to which

hostility and competition existed between the two communities from the days of the return to Zion finds expression in the polemical writing of Ezra–Nehemiah (e.g., Ezra 4; Neh 4:1–2; 6:1–14) and later in Josephus’s retrospective historiography (*Ant.* 9.277–91; 11.302–25, 340–47) (Knoppers 2013, pp. 135–60).²³

This narrative has decisively shaped the views of many scholars since the nineteenth century concerning the relationship between the two communities.²⁴ Since the 1990s, the view that the split was a slow and gradual process has gained ground, the prevailing position holding that the establishment of the temple on Mount Gerizim served as a catalyst for an ongoing conflict and mutual hostility that culminated when John Hyrcanus terminated the activity of the Gerizim temple at the close of the second century BCE (Hensel 2019, pp. 19–24). In recent years, however, this picture has been transformed by the publication of the finds from the archaeological excavations on Mount Gerizim, as well as by numismatic evidence, the bullae and papyri from Wadi Daliyeh, and the results of Adam Zertal’s Manasseh Hill Country Survey (Magen et al. 2004; Zertal 2004, 2007; Dušek 2007; Meshorer and Qedar 2002).²⁵

As a result, a more complex picture of the relationship has emerged, and the current tendency in scholarship is to abandon the “conflict paradigm” that characterized the traditional view.²⁶ Rather than a state of continuous hostility and early separation, the evidence suggests that throughout the Persian and early Hellenistic periods there were contacts and cooperation—at least among the elites of Judah and Samaria—marked by mutual cultural and religious influence. On this model, one should not speak of two wholly separate communities but rather of a broad Yahwistic sphere that crossed administrative and political boundaries and was marked by a shared affiliation with YHWH as the central deity and by shared Israelite traditions. This sphere was neither uniform nor homogeneous: local, institutional, and cultic differences existed between Judah and Samaria. Yet these differences do not require us to posit early theological disagreement or continuous hostility over issues such as cult centralization.²⁷

On this view, the roots of sharp religious polemic and full-fledged exclusion lie not in an ancient theological difference originating in the Persian period, but in later political and economic transformations beginning with the consolidation of Hellenistic rule.²⁸ With the unification of Judah and Samaria—previously separate provinces under Persian rule—into a single Hellenistic administrative district, the two temples were for the first time forced to compete directly for patronage, resources, and tax privileges under Ptolemaic and later Seleucid rule (Kippenberg 1971, pp. 74–85; Hensel 2019, pp. 36–37). It is plausible that this intensifying political and economic competition was translated and reinterpreted by Judean scribes as a theological conflict with ancient roots. They did so by deploying polemical rhetoric designed to undermine the status of Samaritan identity as a legitimate component of the people of Israel, retrojecting the later conflict into the Persian period and the time of the return to Zion (Kratz 2015, pp. 165–84; Hensel 2019, pp. 25–34).

Thus, even granting that the first signs of cultic, institutional, and theological differentiation between Samaritan and Judean worshippers of YHWH had begun to appear already at the end of the Persian period or the beginning of the Hellenistic period, the division between them should not be construed as the direct and straightforward consequence of the mere existence of two temples—one in Jerusalem and the other on Mount Gerizim. It appears that, for a considerable period, Judah and Samaria participated in a shared Yahwistic sphere within which the Torah could function as a broad source of authority for both groups. Yet it was precisely the formation of the Torah as an authoritative text that later created the conditions for sharper separation, as Judeans and Samaritans interpreted and shaped differently the question of the “chosen place” and the status of Mount Gerizim. In this context, the Hasmonean incursions into the

region of Samaria in the second half of the second century BCE—and especially John Hyrcanus’s termination of the Gerizim temple’s activity—served as catalysts that accelerated and hardened the process of separation, contributing to the transformation of existing interpretive, cultic, and institutional differences into a more explicit political and religious rift (Knoppers 2013, pp. 12–13, 214–15; Pummer 2016, pp. 14–15).²⁹

A further contemporary source is no less significant for the present discussion. 2 Macc. 6:2, as part of the description of the decrees of Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 BCE, reads:

μολῦναι δὲ καὶ τὸν ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις νεῶν καὶ προσονομάσαι Διὸς Ὀλυμπίου
καὶ τὸν ἐν Γαριζίν, καθὼς ἐτύγχανον οἱ τὸν τόπον οἰκοῦντες, Διὸς Ξενίου.

Daniel Schwartz has argued persuasively that the clause “καθὼς ἐτύγχανον οἱ τὸν τόπον οἰκοῦντες” is a secondary interpolation, introduced by a copyist under the influence of Josephus’s polemical account (*Ant.* 12.258–64). According to Josephus, the Samaritans declare that they had adopted the Jewish religion only because of plagues that had once afflicted the land, insist that they are not Jews but Sidonians, and request that their temple be renamed in honor of Zeus Xenios. Schwartz adduces several arguments in support of his reading. First, the inclusion of the clause in the original text creates a linguistic difficulty, since it requires the supplementation of a missing verb. It is also difficult to reconcile with the context, for throughout the passage Antiochus is presented as imposing his measures on both Jerusalem and Gerizim rather than acting in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants of Gerizim. Finally, this reading disrupts the stylistic balance of the sentence, since it provides an explanation only for the renaming of Gerizim, but not for that of Jerusalem (D. R. Schwartz 2008, pp. 537–40).

If Schwartz’s correction is accepted and the later addition removed, the original sentence reports in matter-of-fact terms that Antiochus’s coercive decrees were directed against both temples—Jerusalem and Gerizim—without reference either to the Samaritans’ character or to any initiative on their part. From both a linguistic and a theological perspective, the Greek verb μολῦναι, “to defile” or “to desecrate”, appears to presuppose a prior state of sanctity or purity: a place that is already impure, pagan, or devoid of legitimate religious status in the author’s view cannot meaningfully be “defiled”. If, then, the original verse subjects both temples to the same verb of defilement on account of the introduction of the cult of Zeus, this may indicate that the author—or the source on which he relied—regarded the temple on Mount Gerizim as a legitimate Yahwistic cultic site, struck by a decree of persecution in the same manner as the Jerusalem temple. This conclusion is not as anomalous as it might at first appear. The temple on Mount Gerizim was not the only Yahwistic temple outside Jerusalem in this period: the Oniad temple at Leontopolis was established in the same century in Egypt by a member of the Oniad high-priestly family (Josephus, *J.W.* 7.420–436; *Ant.* 13.62–73; Piotrkowski 2019, pp. 100–4, 413–16, 435–39). Its very existence suggests that, at least in some Judean circles, the idea of a Yahwistic temple outside Jerusalem remained conceptually available. This interpretation also fits well with what is stated earlier in 2 Macc 5:22–23, where the author refers to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and those of Mount Gerizim as members of the same γένος, suffering together under Antiochus IV’s decrees (D. R. Schwartz 2008, p. 264; Hensel 2019, p. 33).

If Schwartz’s interpretation is accepted, this passage may constitute a second-century Judean witness that does not yet presuppose the delegitimation of the temple on Mount Gerizim. The author either does not know, or is not troubled by, a commandment understood to require the exclusive centralization of cult in Jerusalem. Such evidence makes it possible to read a reference to Gerizim as a Yahwistic cultic site within a Judean context as well.

Yonatan Adler argues, on similar lines, that for the early Hellenistic period there is no firm basis for assuming that the Torah’s cultic system was recognized as authoritative—or implemented in practice—by the Jerusalem priesthood prior to the rise of the Hasmoneans

(Adler 2022, pp. 230–31, 234; 2025, pp. 36–37). We should accordingly not take it as self-evident that the Deuteronomic commandment of cult centralization had already been understood, at that time, to entail the full delegitimation of all Yahwistic temples outside Jerusalem. On the contrary, Adler emphasizes that other Yahwistic temples existed outside Judah alongside the Jerusalem temple during this period, and that the possibility that even self-identified Judeans visited these sacred sites for cultic purposes cannot be ruled out (Adler 2025, pp. 37–38).³⁰

As in other processes of social and collective boundary formation, one should not assume a simple dichotomy between rigid and predefined camps in Judah after Alexander's conquests, especially at the beginning of the second century BCE. It is more likely that the cultural dominance of Hellenism and the new political frameworks within which Judah operated sharpened and highlighted internal differentiations within Judean society, but did not abruptly produce two homogeneous and closed groups. In practice, one should assume a broad spectrum of positions, affiliations, loyalties, and forms of adoption and adaptation in relation to Hellenistic cultural elements.³¹

5.3.4. A Judean-Hellenistic Historical Profile

The foregoing discussion is therefore constructive as well as critical. It does not simply show that the Gerizim reference fails to prove Samaritan authorship; it also identifies the historical conditions under which a Judean-Hellenistic author becomes intelligible. If cultic centralization in Jerusalem had not yet become a universally operative criterion of Judean identity, and if Yahwists in Judah and Samaria still participated in overlapping textual, cultic, and intellectual worlds, then the author's unpolemical reference to Gerizim can be read within a Judean-Hellenistic horizon as well.

Nor need such an author be imagined in the abstract. Already in the first half of the second century BCE, internal tensions within the Judean elite were evident, as the affairs of the Tobiads and the conflicts surrounding the high priesthood attest.³² The growing Hellenistic cultural influence of these decades, which reached a symbolic climax in the establishment of the gymnasium in Jerusalem,³³ did not divide Judean society into two closed camps, but sharpened existing lines of differentiation within it.³⁴ Some Judeans were deeply immersed in Hellenistic culture, wrote in Greek, and sought to participate in the language, institutions, and prestige of the wider Hellenistic world;³⁵ others were more closely attached to ancestral tradition and regarded such influence with suspicion. A composition such as Fragment 1, written in Greek and at ease with mythographic and euhemeristic conventions while remaining anchored in the figure of Abraham, can be situated plausibly within this Greek-writing Judean elite milieu.

A Judean-Hellenistic author writing in Greek for an educated audience could therefore have linked Melchizedek, Salem, and the Yahwistic temple on Mount Gerizim; depicted Abraham as a guest of the city adjacent to the temple; and construed the name Mount Gerizim as "Mountain of the Most High" (ὄρος ὑψίστου), without necessarily perceiving any contradiction in doing so. Such an author need not have belonged to a Samaritan community in order to treat Gerizim as part of the sacred geography of the patriarchal past. To attribute Fragment 1 to a Samaritan author solely because it refers to the temple on Mount Gerizim presupposes a Hasmonean or post-Hasmonean reality in which Jerusalem was already regarded as the sole legitimate cultic center in Judah. As the foregoing discussion suggests, however, we should not retroject the Judean–Samaritan split of the late Hasmonean period into the first half of the second century BCE; for that earlier period, such an assumption is premature (Adler 2022, pp. 232–33; 2025, pp. 65–67).³⁶ We should rather assume a more complex reality, in which even a Judean author might refer to Mount Gerizim, the mountain of blessing in the Masoretic Text itself (Deut 11:29; Josh 8:33), with-

out thereby signaling Samaritan affiliation. On this reading, the fragment need not be used as evidence for a distinct Samaritan literary milieu; it may instead be read as evidence for a wider Yahwistic intellectual field in which Gerizim traditions could still be meaningful beyond strictly Samaritan communal boundaries.

5.4. Motif Distribution: Giants, Wisdom, and Competing Jewish Traditions

The question of identity can also be approached through the distribution of the motifs preserved in the composition. One especially important and unusual motif is the survival of the giants after the flood—a motif also attested in other extant writings. In Pseudo-Eupolemus, as Michael Tuval observes, these are “arguably the most fascinating traditions about the giants in all of Jewish literature written and/or preserved in Greek” (Tuval 2016, pp. 49–51; see also the bibliography cited in note 6 above). The earliest Greek form of this tradition may be preserved in the Septuagint, which leaves interpretive room for the view that not all the giants perished in the flood: Nimrod, a descendant of the flood survivors, is termed γίγας.³⁷ On this basis Tuval raises the possibility that at least part of the Jewish tradition in Greek presupposed the survival of the giants after the flood, and perhaps even regarded Noah himself as an antediluvian giant. By contrast, most Jewish compositions in Greek appear to have known the Enochic giant tradition, in which the giants are negative figures who did not survive the flood, and they tend to portray them as part of an etiology of evil (Wis 14:6; 3 Macc 2:4; Bar 3:24–28; 4 Bar 3:10; Sir 16:7; T. Reu. 5:5–7). Other authors adopted different strategies for explaining the resemblance between Gen 6:1–4 and Greek myths (Darshan 2014, pp. 155–78, with further bibliography at 155 n. 1): Philo of Alexandria (Gig. 58–61) neutralized the mythic force of the verses through allegorical interpretation,³⁸ whereas Pseudo-Eupolemus and Book 1 of the Sibylline Oracles (1.88, 91–92, 99–103), for their part, go further than most in reintegrating the giants into the history of humanity, culture, and wisdom (Tuval 2016, pp. 49–53).

The giant tradition in Pseudo-Eupolemus may also be set alongside the traditions reflected in early apocalyptic literature and related compositions from the third to the first centuries BCE.³⁹ In these texts too, the ambiguous wording of Gen 6:1–4 gave rise to diverse exegetical traditions concerning the fate of the giants in the flood and the related transmission of antediluvian wisdom.

As noted above, Pseudo-Eupolemus represents a euhemeristic tradition in which the giants survive the flood and are associated with Babylon, the tower, and, by implication, the chain of wisdom transmission that runs from Enoch to Abraham. Loren Stuckenbruck has shown that early apocalyptic texts rework this complex of traditions in a markedly different direction. The Book of Watchers, especially 1 Enoch 6–16, distinguishes the illicit knowledge taught by the sinful watchers from the legitimate wisdom revealed to Enoch by the angels and restricts deliverance from the flood to Noah and his sons; the giants do not survive in bodily form but persist only as evil spirits (Stuckenbruck 2000, pp. 354–77).⁴⁰ The Book of Giants, on Stuckenbruck’s reading, carries this tendency further: although it may preserve a false hope among some of the giants that they might be spared punishment, it ultimately negates that hope. The giants come gradually to recognize that they enjoy no exemption from judgment, that they do not constitute a legitimate link in the transmission of wisdom, and that the only ones to be saved from the flood are Noah and his sons (Stuckenbruck 2000, pp. 366–69; 1997, pp. 37–38). The Animal Apocalypse, especially 1 Enoch 89:6, sharpens this line still further by depicting the giants, represented as great beasts, sinking in the waters of the flood with no possibility of escape (Stuckenbruck 2000, pp. 369–70).⁴¹

Stuckenbruck suggests that the sharp contrast concerning the survival of the giants between these traditions and the tradition reflected in Pseudo-Eupolemus may give ex-

pression to a theological polemic over the origin of evil (Stuckenbruck 2000, pp. 355–56, 374–77).⁴² Pseudo-Eupolemus accepts the survival of the giants without difficulty and even permits them to be understood as playing a positive—or at least neutral—role in the transmission of knowledge. The apocalyptic traditions, by contrast, deny the bodily survival of the giants and the possibility of regarding them as a legitimate link in the transmission of wisdom; they view them, or their evil spirits, as negative elements that serve to account for the origin of evil.

This distinction bears directly on the question of identity, since it situates the giant tradition in Pseudo-Eupolemus within a polemical context markedly different from that of anti-Samaritan polemic. As noted above, wherever such polemic can be identified—or plausibly inferred—in Second Temple literature, it typically centers on questions of cultic site, lineage, and legitimacy: the status of Mount Gerizim and its temple, the claims of the inhabitants of Shechem or Gerizim, the origins of the Samaritans, and their portrayal as a rival and inferior group. Even in the Qumran texts that have been connected with anti-Samaritan polemic, we find no theological polemic of this kind. Those texts focus on Joseph, the exile of the northern tribes, and the establishment of “a high place on a high mountain” as a challenge to the status of Jerusalem—not on angels, giants, antediluvian wisdom, or the origin of evil.⁴³

In the absence of clear evidence for Judean–Samaritan polemic addressing such questions in the third and second centuries BCE, the tension between the tradition of the survival of the giants in Pseudo-Eupolemus and the contrary tradition in the apocalyptic literature is better understood within a broader debate over the interpretation of Gen 6:1–4. Scholarship has accounted for the hostility toward the giants in several ways: as a mythical account of the origin of evil; as a response to Greek traditions concerning Titans and giants; as a reworking of Mesopotamian traditions associated with Gilgamesh and Humbaba; as an engagement with Levantine traditions concerning Hermon and Lebanon; or even as an anti-imperial discourse in a Hellenistic setting (Stuckenbruck 2000, pp. 354–77; Wright 2005, pp. 137–42, 151, 165).⁴⁴

For the present argument, what matters is that these explanations, for all their differences, do not link the polemic over the giants to Gerizim, Samaritan identity, or Judean–Samaritan rivalry. They situate it, rather, within a tradition-historical context concerned with antediluvian wisdom, mythic violence, the flood, and the origin of evil. The comparison with the Book of Giants and related traditions therefore shows not that the motif of the giants’ survival was exclusively Judean, but that—on the available evidence—it can be situated within a broader Second Temple Jewish exegetical landscape in which competing interpretations of Gen 6:1–4 circulated. This conclusion does not exclude the possibility that similar traditions circulated in Samaritan circles, whose literature from this period has not survived; it only shows that the motif does not require a Samaritan setting.

The dialectic between these two traditions—one in which the giants perished in the flood and one in which at least some of them survived—did not disappear but persisted into rabbinic transmission, where both lines concerning the fate of the giants were preserved. This need not imply direct literary dependence; rather, it indicates the distribution of certain motifs within broader Jewish lines of transmission. On the one hand, the generation of the flood, who were tall in stature and sought to save themselves on the mountaintops, were destroyed when God raised the waters fifteen cubits above the mountains (b. Yoma 76a; Gen. Rab. 32:11). On the other hand, a competing tradition also survived, according to which Og survived the flood: “And all existence on the earth was blotted out, as it is said: ‘And he blotted out all existence that was upon the face of the ground,’ except for Noah and all that was with him in the ark, as it is said: ‘Only Noah was left, and those who were with him in the ark,’ and except for Og king of Bashan, who sat on one of the

rungs of the ark and swore to Noah and his sons that he would be their servant forever. What did Noah do? He pierced one hole in the ark and would extend his food to him every day, and he too survived” (Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer 23:8).⁴⁵

Menahem Kister observes that although Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer is a late composition, “this midrash has long been recognized to contain some ancient material as well, unattested in earlier midrashim, some of which has affinities to works of the Second Temple period” (Kister 2012, pp. 69–70). It is likely, then, that Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer does not invent a new tradition *ex nihilo* but preserves and reactivates, within a later rabbinic midrashic framework, ancient mythic material that had been largely suppressed in classical rabbinic literature.⁴⁶

Other motifs in Pseudo-Eupolemus are likewise paralleled in later Jewish writings (Wacholder 1963, pp. 98–99, 103, 109). The portrayal of Enoch as the discoverer of astrological wisdom, and of Methuselah as the one who transmits this knowledge to later generations, parallels the tradition reflected in 1 Enoch and the Genesis Apocryphon, according to which the angels revealed knowledge to Enoch and it was transmitted through Methuselah (1 Enoch 106:1–12; Genesis Apocryphon [1Q20] col. 2, 19–21). The portrayal of Abraham as versed in Chaldean wisdom and astrology, and at times as one who transmits this knowledge to other nations, is not unique to Pseudo-Eupolemus: Wacholder stresses that this is “a common theme in ancient Jewish sources” and adduces in this connection Josephus, Philo, Artapanus, and talmudic traditions (Wacholder 1963, p. 103).⁴⁷

In similar fashion, the reworking of the episode of Sarah in Pharaoh’s house—including the preservation of Sarah’s chastity and Pharaoh’s inability to have intercourse with her—is also paralleled in later Jewish sources, most notably the Genesis Apocryphon and Genesis Rabbah (Genesis Apocryphon [1Q20] col. 20, 16–18, 20; Gen. Rab. 40, ed. Theodor-Albeck, 389).

No surviving literature from this period can be securely identified as Samaritan. We therefore cannot know what traditions Samaritan circles preserved, nor how closely these may have resembled those reflected in the fragment. For the present purpose, however, this is not the decisive question. What matters is whether these motifs can be situated within Jewish literature of the period, and the evidence assembled here indicates that they can. The polemical tension reflected in the apocalyptic literature, together with the distribution of parallels to these motifs across Jewish literature, situates the fragment within a broader Jewish exegetical landscape and thereby strengthens the plausibility of a Judean-Hellenistic setting, without amounting to a demonstrable attribution.

6. Pseudo-Eupolemus and Eupolemus

The discussion thus far has addressed the question of whether the author should be identified as Samaritan. It has reexamined the principal arguments adduced for this attribution, shown that they are not decisive, and outlined a historical framework within which a Judean-Hellenistic author becomes plausible. We may now turn to a separate question: whether Fragment 1 belongs to Eupolemus himself. To that end, Doran’s arguments require reconsideration.

Doran argues that Fragment 1 should be attributed to Eupolemus himself, contending that features often regarded as foreign to Eupolemus—notably syncretism—are in fact consistent with the compositional method evident in the fragments generally regarded as authentic (Doran 1987, p. 273). One of Wacholder’s arguments against attributing the fragment to Eupolemus is that, in the fragment on Moses, Moses is called “the first wise man” (πρῶτον σοφόν), whereas in the fragment on Abraham, Abraham is described as “exceeding all in nobility and wisdom” (ἐὺγενεῖα καὶ σοφία πάντας ὑπερβεβηκότα) (Wacholder 1963, p. 84 n. 10). Doran replies that Eupolemus calls Moses “wise” specifically

in the context of the invention of writing and laws, and that this designation does not exclude earlier figures who were wise in other domains. He compares this with Philo of Byblos's account, which presents a series of inventors in different fields—hunting, fishing, and ironworking—who precede the inventor of writing, Taaautos/Hermes. On this view, Eupolemus could call Abraham wise in astrology while Moses retains preeminence in writing and law, with no internal contradiction (Doran 1987, p. 273).⁴⁸

Doran further points to linguistic and exegetical affinities between the two texts. The fragment on Abraham reflects close familiarity with the Septuagint, both in the spelling of names and in terminology—a feature shared with Eupolemus. He also argues that the fragment draws on Palestinian Jewish traditions: the association of Enoch with astrology, the figure of Methuselah, and the exegetical tradition that Pharaoh could not have intercourse with Sarah. In his view, these elements are consistent with a Judean author rewriting Scripture in light of contemporary exegetical traditions (Doran 1987, p. 274).

For Doran, Polyhistor's attribution is essentially correct. Eupolemus is a Judean author seeking to bridge biblical tradition and universal Hellenistic culture, and the fragment on Abraham can be read as part of the same broader work to which the fragments on Moses and Solomon belong, reflecting Eupolemus's concern to create points of contact between the biblical primeval narratives and the origin stories of the peoples of the region (Doran 1987, pp. 273–74). Yet even if Doran's arguments were accepted in full, they would show at most that there is no substantive contradiction between Fragment 1 and the authentic fragments of Eupolemus. The same arguments would apply just as well to attributing the fragment to a Judean author other than Eupolemus.

A further difficulty with Doran's argument lies in a clear difference of literary technique. Eupolemus, as we have seen, bridges biblical tradition and Hellenistic culture by magnifying figures such as Moses and Solomon. Pseudo-Eupolemus proceeds otherwise. He too links biblical tradition with the wider Hellenistic world, but does so by incorporating foreign mythological elements into the biblical narrative and redeploying them as a euhemeristic apologetic device—a means of reinforcing the authority of the biblical account and the stature of its figures by interweaving them with mythologies familiar from Hellenistic culture. The literary analysis thus points to two techniques distinct enough to call into question the attribution of Fragment 1 to the same author as the authentic Eupolemus fragments, and strengthens the view that Alexander Polyhistor grouped together two distinct compositions under the name of Eupolemus.

Taken together, the literary and philological considerations strengthen the view that Polyhistor grouped under the name of Eupolemus material that need not derive from a single authorial composition.

7. Conclusions

The foregoing discussion suggests that the traditional attribution of Pseudo-Eupolemus to a Samaritan author—though often treated in scholarship as nearly self-evident—rests on a set of indicators requiring reassessment in light of recent textual, historical, and archaeological evidence. Reconsidered, the arguments from syncretism, “Phoenician patriotism”, and the connection to Mount Gerizim can each be accounted for within a broader Judean-Hellenistic or shared Yahwistic context. In some cases, these indicators can no longer function as differentiating criteria; in others, they reflect an anachronistic retrojection of divisions between the two Yahwistic communities in Palestine during the first half of the second century BCE—divisions that sharpened only at a later stage. The traditional attribution can no longer be treated as self-evident.

The aim of the present article is not to replace one certainty with another but to restore historical complexity. Its positive claim is correspondingly modest but substantive:

a Judean-Hellenistic setting is not merely possible by default once Samaritan identification is weakened, but historically intelligible in light of the social, cultic, and textual conditions surveyed above. When the text is read against the background of Hellenistic Palestine before the transformations brought about by the Hasmonean period, a layered and diverse Yahwistic landscape comes into view—one marked by contact, overlap, and competition, in which attitudes toward ancient traditions, cultic centers, and cultural prestige had not yet hardened into rigid boundaries. Within such a landscape, a Judean-Hellenistic composition that mentions a temple on Mount Gerizim without explicit hostility, incorporates mythographic traditions, and presents Abraham as a foundational figure of wisdom and culture need no longer be considered historically implausible. It should instead be treated as a historically serious possibility.

The discussion of the motif of the giants' survival, together with the other motifs attested in the surviving Jewish literature of the period, is consistent with this picture. It situates the composition within a broader Jewish tradition-historical field and underscores the methodological caution required whenever a single feature is isolated as the basis for a binary ascription. In this respect, Pseudo-Eupolemus is not merely a test case for the methodological problem of assigning ethnic or religious identity to fragmentary Hellenistic texts. It may also serve as an important witness to a period in which the boundaries of Yahwistic belonging remained more fluid than we have been accustomed to assume.

On the possible Judean reading advanced here, the giant traditions in the fragment can be put to a different historical use. They need not be read against a Samaritan foil, but may instead be situated within an intra-Jewish debate over the origin of evil and the status of antediluvian knowledge, a debate reflected from the opposite side in the Enochic Book of Watchers and the Qumran Book of Giants (Stuckenbruck 2000, pp. 374–77). So read, the fragment becomes a witness less to Judean-Samaritan relations than to the range of competing positions available within Judean-Hellenistic culture itself.

If the author was Judean, the unpolemical reference to a Yahwistic temple on Mount Gerizim may also be added, with due caution, to the small body of indications that the exclusive centralization of cult in Jerusalem was not yet a binding norm in pre-Hasmonean Judah. The fragment cannot carry this weight on its own. Since the Judean reading is itself supported in part by that wider picture, treating the fragment as independent proof of it would be circular. Taken together with the independent archaeological and documentary evidence assembled by Adler (2022, 2025), however, it coheres with the view that several features later regarded as constitutive of Judaism took shape only under Hasmonean authority and the broader enforcement of Torah observance after the revolt.

The relationship between Pseudo-Eupolemus and Eupolemus himself has been treated separately from the question of the author's identity, though the two are related. On this point, philological and literary considerations strengthen the case that the author of Pseudo-Eupolemus should not be identified with Eupolemus. If this conclusion is sound, then even on the assumption that the author was a Judean, Pseudo-Eupolemus should not be regarded as a further fragment of Eupolemus's work but as an independent Judean composition—close to Eupolemus in transmission yet distinct in its concerns, rhetoric, and stylistic profile.

The evidence as a whole does not permit us to determine with certainty who the author of Pseudo-Eupolemus was. It does, however, call for greater caution toward the traditional attribution. I propose, accordingly, a model that accounts for the evidence without requiring a Samaritan attribution: Pseudo-Eupolemus is best regarded as a possible Judean-Hellenistic composition from a period before the religious and cultural boundary between the two Yahwistic communities in Palestine had fully hardened. On this reading,

it stands as a particularly valuable witness to this early stage in the formation of Yahwistic identities in Hellenistic Palestine.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: No new data were created or analyzed in this study. All primary textual evidence discussed is available in the published editions and digital resources cited in the article. The Greek text discussed in Appendix A is taken from Dindorf (1867).

Acknowledgments: I am grateful to Ory Amitay, Hila Dayfani, Itamar Kislev, Gad Barnea, Ohad Magori, and Jonathan Ben-Dov, who read earlier versions of this article and offered valuable comments and suggestions. I also wish to thank the anonymous reviewers for their careful reading and constructive feedback.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Appendix A. The Text of the Two Fragments⁴⁹

Appendix A.1. Fragment 1

“Εὐπόλεμος δὲ ἐν τῷ περὶ Ἰουδαίων τῆς Ἀσσυρίας φησὶ πόλιν Βαβυλῶνα πρῶτον μὲν κτισθῆναι ὑπὸ τῶν διασωθέντων ἐκ τοῦ κατακλισμοῦ· εἶναι δὲ αὐτοὺς γίγαντας, οἰκοδομεῖν δὲ τὸν ἱστορούμενον πύργον. πεσόντος δὲ τούτου ὑπὸ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ ἐνεργείας τοὺς γίγαντας διασπαρῆναι καθ’ ὅλην τὴν γῆν. δεκάτῃ δὲ γενεᾷ, φησὶν, ἐν πόλει τῆς Βαβυλωνίας Καμαρίνη, ἦν τινας λέγειν πόλιν Οὐρίην, εἶναι δὲ μεθερμηνευομένην Χαλδαίων πόλιν, ἐν τρισκαιδεκάτῃ γενέσθαι Ἀβραὰμ γενεᾷ, εὐγενείᾳ καὶ σοφίᾳ πάντας ὑπερβεβηκότα, ὃν δὴ καὶ τὴν ἀστρολογίαν καὶ Χαλδαϊκὴν εὗρεῖν, ἐπὶ τε τὴν εὐσέβειαν ὁρμήσαντα εὐαρεστήσαι τῷ θεῷ. τοῦτον δὲ διὰ τὰ προστάγματα τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς Φοινίκην ἐλθόντα κατοικήσαι, καὶ τροπὰς ἡλίου καὶ σελήνης καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα διδάξαντα τοὺς Φοίνικας εὐαρεστήσαι τῷ βασιλεῖ αὐτῶν. ὕστερον δὲ Ἀρμενίους ἐπιστρατεῦσαι τοῖς Φοίνιξι· νικησάντων δὲ καὶ αἰχμαλωτισαμένων τὸν ἀδελφιδοῦν αὐτοῦ τὸν Ἀβραὰμ μετὰ οἰκετῶν βοηθήσαντα ἐγκρατῇ γενέσθαι τῶν αἰχμαλωτισαμένων, καὶ τῶν πολεμίων αἰχμαλωτίσαι τέκνα καὶ γυναῖκας. πρέσβειν δὲ παραγενομένων πρὸς αὐτὸν ὅπως χρήματα λαβὼν ἀπολυτρώσῃ ταῦτα, μὴ προελέσθαι τοῖς δυστυχούσιν ἐπεμβαίνειν, ἀλλὰ τὰς τροφὰς λαβόντα τῶν νεανίσκων ἀποδοῦναι τὰ αἰχμάλωτα, ξενισθῆναι τε αὐτὸν ὑπὸ πόλεως ἱερὸν Ἀργαριζίν, ὃ εἶναι μεθερμηνευόμενον ὄρος ὑψίστου· παρὰ δὲ τοῦ Μελχισεδέκ ἱερέως ὄντος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ βασιλεύοντος λαβεῖν δῶρα. λιμοῦ δὲ γενομένου τὸν Ἀβραὰμ ἀπαλλαγῆναι εἰς Αἴγυπτον πανοικίᾳ, κάκει κατοικεῖν, τὴν τε γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ τὸν βασιλέα τῶν Αἰγυπτίων γῆμαι, φάντος αὐτοῦ ἀδελφὴν εἶναι. περισσότερον δ’ ἰστόρησεν ὅτι οὐκ ἠδύνατο αὐτῇ συγγενέσθαι, καὶ ὅτι συνέβη φθείρεσθαι αὐτοῦ τὸν λαὸν καὶ τὸν οἶκον. μάντις δὲ αὐτοῦ καλέσαντος τοῦτο φάναι, μὴ εἶναι χήραν τὴν γυναῖκα· τὸν δὲ βασιλέα τῶν Αἰγυπτίων οὕτως ἐπιγνῶναι ὅτι γυνὴ ἦν τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ, καὶ ἀποδοῦναι αὐτὴν τῷ ἀνδρί. συζήσαντα δὲ τὸν Ἀβραὰμ ἐν Ἡλιουπόλει τοῖς Αἰγυπτίων ἱερεῦσι πολλὰ μεταδιδάξαι αὐτοὺς, καὶ τὴν ἀστρολογίαν καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τοῦτον αὐτοῖς εἰσηγήσασθαι, φάμενον Βαβυλωνίους ταῦτα καὶ αὐτὸν εὕρηκεναι, τὴν δὲ εὗρεσιν αὐτῶν εἰς Ἐνώχ ἀναπέμπειν, καὶ τοῦτον εὕρηκεναι πρῶτον τὴν ἀστρολογίαν, οὐκ Αἰγυπτίους. Βαβυλωνίους γὰρ λέγειν πρῶτον γενέσθαι Βῆλον, ὃν εἶναι Κρόνον· ἐκ τούτου δὲ γενέσθαι Βῆλον καὶ Χαναάν, τοῦτον δὲ τὸν Χαναάν γεννήσαι τὸν πατέρα τῶν Φοινίκων, τούτου δὲ Χοὺμ υἱὸν γενέσθαι, ὃν

ὑπὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων λέγεσθαι Ἀσβολον, πατέρα δὲ Αἰθιοπῶν, ἀδελφὸν δὲ τοῦ Μεστραεῖμ, πατέρα Αἰγυπτίων· Ἕλληνας δὲ λέγειν τὸν Ἀτλαντα εὐρηκέναι ἀστρολογίαν· εἶναι δὲ τὸν Ἀτλαντα τὸν αὐτὸν καὶ Ἐνῶχ· τοῦ δὲ Ἐνῶχ γενέσθαι υἱὸν Μαθουσάλαμ, ὃν πάντα δι’ ἀγγέλων θεοῦ γινῶναι, καὶ ἡμᾶς οὕτως ἐπιγινῶναι”. (*Praep. ev.* 9.17).

Appendix A.2. Fragment 2

“ἐν δὲ ἀδεσπότοις εὗρομεν τὸν Ἀβραὰμ ἀναφέροντα εἰς τοὺς γίγαντας, τούτους δὲ οἰκοῦντας ἐν τῇ Βαβυλωνίᾳ διὰ τὴν ἀσέβειαν ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν ἀναιρεθῆναι, ὧν ἓνα Βῆλον ἐκφεύγοντα τὸν θάνατον ἐν Βαβυλῶνι κατοικῆσαι, πύργον τε κατασκευάσαντα ἐν αὐτῷ διαιτᾶσθαι, ὃν δὴ ἀπὸ τοῦ κατασκευάσαντος Βήλου Βῆλον ὀνομασθῆναι. τὸν δὲ Ἀβραμὸν τὴν ἀστρολογικὴν ἐπιστήμην παιδευθέντα πρῶτον μὲν ἐλθεῖν εἰς Φοινίκην καὶ τοὺς Φοίνικας ἀστρολογίαν διδάξει, ὕστερον δὲ εἰς Αἴγυπτον παραγενέσθαι”. (*Praep. ev.* 9.18.2).

Notes

- ¹ For a biographical summary and bibliography, see [Kaizer \(2010\)](#). The term “Judean” in this article denotes affiliation with Yehud/Judah in the territorial, administrative, and ethnic sense, while the terms “Yahwistic” and “YHWH worship” denote religious affiliation with the cult of YHWH. The term “Jewish” is used more sparingly, where the historical or linguistic context warrants it. For convenience, “Samaritans” denotes the Yahwistic group in Samaria whose cultic center was on Mount Gerizim, even though the term is partly anachronistic and, so far as we know, was not used in the period under discussion as the group’s self-designation. See [Knoppers \(2013\)](#), pp. 14–15).
- ² The fragments are preserved in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 9.17.2–9 (Fragment 1) and 9.18.2 (Fragment 2). For the purposes of the present argument, “Pseudo-Eupolemus” refers primarily to the author of Fragment 1, where the Gerizim reference on which the Samaritan attribution chiefly rests occurs. Fragment 2 is discussed below in connection with the corpus question and, for reasons clarified there, is not used as the primary basis for determining provenance. The Greek text printed in Appendix A follows the public-domain edition of [Dindorf \(1867\)](#). The English translation of Fragments 1 and 2 follows [Kaizer \(2010\)](#). Unless otherwise indicated, all other English translations cited in this article are my own. For a standard auxiliary edition, see also [Holladay \(1983\)](#), pp. 157–87. The literature that deals directly with the subject includes, among others, [Freudenthal \(1875\)](#), pp. 82–103; [Wacholder \(1963\)](#), pp. 83–113; [1974](#), pp. 104–6, 135, 205–6, 287–93; [Gruen \(1998\)](#), pp. 146–53; [Doran \(1985\)](#), pp. 873–82; [1987](#), pp. 270–74; [Sterling \(1992\)](#), pp. 187–206; [2013](#), pp. 705–13; [Walter \(1965\)](#), pp. 282–90; [1980](#), pp. 137–43).
- ³ See below for a detailed analysis of the Greek toponym and its significance.
- ⁴ On Berossus as a terminus post quem, see ([Wacholder 1963](#), pp. 85, 90–93, 102; [Holladay 1983](#), p. 159; cf. [Sterling 1992](#), pp. 202–3). On the use of the Greek Pentateuch as excluding a date before the middle of the third century BCE, see ([Wacholder 1963](#), p. 87; cf. [Sterling 1992](#), p. 190). On Alexander Polyhistor as the outer terminus ante quem, see ([Wacholder 1963](#), p. 85; [Holladay 1983](#), p. 159). On the possible dependence of Sib. Or. 3 on Pseudo-Eupolemus, see ([Wacholder 1963](#), pp. 86, 90–93; [Hengel 1974](#), 1:89; 2:60 n. 246; [Holladay 1983](#), p. 164 n. 24; [Sterling 1992](#), p. 203; cf. [Sterling 2013](#), p. 708).
- ⁵ On the cultural-historical significance of the composition’s Babylonian and Phoenician orientation and its subordination of Egypt, see ([Wacholder 1963](#), p. 87; [Hengel 1974](#), 1:88–92, 94–95; 2:59–61 nn. 238–61; [Holladay 1983](#), pp. 159–60; [Sterling 1992](#), pp. 190–91, 205; cf. [Sterling 2013](#), p. 706).
- ⁶ According to Stuckenbruck, Pseudo-Eupolemus presents the giants as survivors of the flood—positive culture heroes and transmitters of knowledge and wisdom to humanity—whereas the Enochic literature pre-sents the giants, together with the knowledge associated with the watchers and their giant offspring, as products of sin and as sources of evil in the world. Stuckenbruck develops the comparison between Pseudo-Eupolemus, the Septuagint, and the Enochic traditions, suggesting that the Enochic formulation may constitute a polemical response to traditions that ascribed the “mediation” of knowledge to the giants. See also [Stuckenbruck \(1997\)](#), pp. 37–38. On the deheroization of the giants in the Book of Watchers, where the knowledge associated with them is framed as bound up with the origin of evil, see [Wright \(2005\)](#), pp. 151, 165). On the Mesopotamian context of the giant names Gilgamesh and Humbaba, which supports the view that the Enochic tradition participates in a wider discourse and competition with rival traditions about the giants, see [Reeves \(1992\)](#), pp. 119–20, p. 158 n. 365).
- ⁷ In contrast to [Doran \(1987\)](#), p. 247), who generally accepts the names of authors as given by Polyhistor, [Freudenthal \(1875\)](#), p. 91) and others ascribe less reliability to Polyhistor. Such skepticism, however, usually concerns confusion among known authors or the attribution of an anonymous fragment to a known author. It does not, in itself, warrant treating a passage explicitly introduced as anonymous as an independent summary composed by Polyhistor himself.

- ⁸ Sterling (2013, pp. 705–6). Doran (1987, pp. 270–71) likewise rejects the possibility that a single author wrote both fragments and argues that Fragment 2 evinces polytheism through the expression ὑπὸ τῶν θεῶν and was not written by a Judean or Samaritan author. Sterling (2013, p. 712) raises the possibility that this is an error of the epitomator or a literal translation of the word אֱלֹהִים, although such a translation is not characteristic of the Septuagint.
- ⁹ See the discussions of Freudenthal’s use of syncretism and of the anti-Gerizim polemics below. Knoppers (2013, pp. 118–20) argues that the numismatic evidence points to a more diverse and cosmopolitan Samaritan iconographic horizon than that of Judah, especially to a stronger visual affinity with Phoenician, Cilician, and Achaemenid models. Yet it is difficult to see this as sufficient evidence for a distinctive Samaritan tendency toward religious syncretism. Alongside the iconographic differences, Knoppers emphasizes the dominance of Yahwistic names in the corpus, the relative absence of pagan cults and cultic figurines, and the high degree of religious overlap between Samaria and Judah.
- ¹⁰ To strengthen his claim concerning the Samaritan character, Freudenthal relied on Josephus (for example *Ant.* 11.302–25), rabbinic literature (b. *Ber.* 47b; b. *Hul.* 4a), and 2 Macc. 6:2. Against the use of Josephus to prove Samaritan syncretism and against Josephus’s reliability on this matter, see Pummer (2009, p. 177).
- ¹¹ In Artapanus, according to Gruen (1998, p. 159), Moses is not assimilated to Greek traditions; rather, his figure absorbs and appropriates Musaeus and Hermes, becoming the source of Greek culture itself. With regard to Aristobulus, Gruen (1998, pp. 251, 295) emphasizes that the broader Judean strategy does not merely involve adaptation to the Greek world but seeks to present the Torah as the source on which distinctive forms of Greek thought depend, so that even Homer and Plato are represented as dependent on Moses and Israelite tradition.
- ¹² In Collins the emphasis is somewhat more cautious than in Gruen. He likewise rejects the dichotomous model of assimilation or resistance, but does so by distinguishing among different cultural domains rather than by recourse to the term “appropriation”.
- ¹³ Wacholder notes that the Septuagint consistently transliterates the Hebrew word “Canaan” when it refers to the land of the patriarchs or the land of the Jews, but sometimes translates Φοινίκη when the reference is to the produce of the land or to a context not connected with Jews: Exod. 6:15; Josh. 5:1; Prov. 31:24.
- ¹⁴ Doran (1987, pp. 259, 272) explains that Artapanus, too, effectively represents the Egyptian position in this de-bate, since he shapes Moses in the image of Egyptian benefactors of culture: Moses invents technological means, divides Egypt into nomes, establishes local deities and the sacred script for priests, thereby paralleling Hermes, Thoth, Isis, and Sesostris in Egyptian-Hellenistic traditions.
- ¹⁵ As Ben-Dov (2018–2019, pp. 191–93) shows, other contemporary Judean traditions attest to the broad diffusion of Phoenician material within Judean literature. Ben-Dov emphasizes that the Aramaic writings from Qumran preserve “mythological remains from the Levant”, that the watcher traditions are explicitly connected with Hermon and Lebanon, and that the *Book of Giants* contains Ahiram, a distinctly Phoenician royal name. The name also appears, in a historiographical context, in Eupolemus.
- ¹⁶ The Genesis Apocryphon 22:13, Josephus (*Ant.* 1.180; *War* 6.438), and the Targums Onqelos, Neofiti, and Pseudo-Jonathan to Gen. 14:18 identify it with Jerusalem.
- ¹⁷ See the entry סָלִים in HALOT Online. Several early Christian interpreters mention a place called Sālim. Especially interesting is Heb. 7:2: “βασιλεὺς Σαλήμ, ὃ ἐστὶν βασιλεὺς εἰρήνης”.
- ¹⁸ Especially interesting in this context is the testimony of Eupolemus (*Praep. ev.* 9.34.13), whose identification as Judean is undisputed, according to which the name “Jerusalem” derives from the combination “temple of Solomon” (ἱερὸν Σολομῶνος). That is, Eupolemus himself either did not know, or knew and rejected, an etymological tradition according to which the name Jerusalem derives from “Salem”. See Doran (1987, pp. 272–73).
- ¹⁹ See also Pummer’s discussion (Pummer 2009, p. 50) against Egger (1986) concerning the significance of the use of Ἀργαριζὶν in Josephus (*War* 1.63). Contrary to earlier claims that these papyri belong to the Samaritikon, the Greek translation of the Samaritan Torah, Tov (1999, pp. 459–75) has shown that these papyri probably represent a non-Samaritan edition of the Septuagint. Pummer (1987, p. 25) adds that additional readings identified as Samaritan were originally non-Samaritan: the use of the verb “chose” in the past tense instead of “will choose” in Deuteronomy survived also in non-Samaritan texts such as the Bohairic translation, Latin codices, and several Greek manuscripts.
- ²⁰ Eshel (1991, p. 134) read “הַר גִּרְזִים” on side B of the papyrus fragment found in the “Scrolls Room” south of the synagogue at Masada. Talmon relied on the assumption that only Samaritans wrote “Har-Gerizim” as one word, but Eshel—following Pummer—argued that this is not in itself evidence, and suggested regarding the papyrus as a remnant of a Judean psalm praising the destruction of the Samaritan temple.
- ²¹ In the Samaritan version of the Decalogue in Exod. 20:13 (see notes 4 and 5), the command reads: “When you have crossed the Jordan, you shall set up these stones, which I command you today, on Har Gerizim, and there you shall build an altar to YHWH your God...”. The parallel version in Deut. 5:17 (see notes 4 and 5) reads HarGerizim (“הַר גִּרְזִים”). The translations of the Samaritan passages are mine and are based on the Samaritan Pentateuch as edited by Florentin and Tal (2011, pp. 365, 765–66). See Schorch (2011, pp. 31–33) and Dayfani (2022, pp. 673–94), with a full bibliography on the question of the exclusive Samaritan character of these textual forms at 675 n. 6.

- ²² Knoppers (2013, pp. 57–62) argues that vv. 34–41 are a later layer whose purpose was to harness the story in vv. 24–33 to a contemporary polemic against the Samaritans. For bibliography in this connection, see Knoppers (2013, p. 58 n. 29).
- ²³ Knoppers analyzes the passages in Ezra 4 and Nehemiah 4 and 6 at length and argues that the biblical author employs sharp polemical rhetoric in order to present the political and economic competition between local leaders, such as Nehemiah and Sanballat, as deep religious and ethnic hostility. He construes the “adversaries of Judah and Benjamin” in Ezra 4 as a polemical literary construction designed to exclude the Samaritans from the legitimate community of the worshippers of the God of Israel. For an important monograph on Josephus and the Samaritans, see Pummer (2009).
- ²⁴ For a comprehensive analysis of this influence and bibliography, see Hensel (2016, pp. 12–14).
- ²⁵ For a discussion about the finds and further bibliography, see Knoppers (2013, pp. 109–31).
- ²⁶ The foundations of this thesis were laid by Kratz (2015, pp. 165–84). For the development of the trend toward abandoning the “conflict paradigm” in favor of a model of prolonged coexistence, see Hensel (2019, pp. 19–42); Knoppers (2013, pp. 135–68).
- ²⁷ On cultural continuity and the existence of two equal-status Yahwistic communities participating in a shared religious sphere and an aniconic cult, see Pummer (2016, pp. 24–29, 288). Some scholars argue that co-operation between the communities was so significant that both participated in shaping a “common Pentateuch”, formulated with deliberate textual ambiguity such that both cultic centers could be legitimated. See Nihan (2007, pp. 187–223) and, somewhat more cautiously, Knoppers (2013, pp. 174, 188–93).
- ²⁸ On the translation of political and economic competition under Ptolemaic and Seleucid rule into theological conflict and polemical literature that diminishes the place of Samaria, see Kratz (2015, pp. 165–84), and Hensel’s discussion (Hensel 2019, pp. 34–37). For the political and historical background of this polemic in the Hellenistic period, see Kippenberg (1971, pp. 74–85).
- ²⁹ Evidence supporting this thesis is the fact that polemics against the Gerizim community appear in the extrabiblical textual evidence available to us only from the second half of the second century BCE, after the Hasmonean revolt. Only then do references to the Gerizim community become more frequent, and only then does the polemical rhetoric become markedly sharper. None of these texts, however, contains a direct reference to the Samaritans. The most prominent text in scholarship in this connection is 4Q371–373, the “Prayer of Joseph” from Qumran, in which the phrase “and they made themselves a high place on a high mountain to provoke Israel”, together with the designation “fools”, may be understood as anti-Samaritan polemic. See Eshel (1991, pp. 126–28), and compare Ben Sira 50:26: “and the foolish people who live in Shechem” and the Greek version “καὶ ὁ λαὸς ὁ μωρὸς ὁ κατωικῶν ἐν Σικίμοις”, see Muraoka (2023, p. 766). The Greek translator of Testament of Levi 7:2 also uses μωρὸς. In the fragments of Theodotus that have survived, some scholars find anti-Samaritan polemic in the negative description of the inhabitants of Shechem. A possible polemic also appears in Jubilees 34; see Werman (2015, p. 445).
- ³⁰ Among the personal names found on an ostrakon in the excavations on Mount Gerizim is the name “[Y]ehud”; see Magen et al. (2004, no. 43); Knoppers (2013, p. 127). Barnea (2024, p. 12) argues that some residents of Yehud also made pilgrimages to the temple on Mount Gerizim.
- ³¹ For a broad sociological theoretical framework of processes of group-boundary formation, see Wimmer (2008, pp. 972–73, 990–92). On the complexity of Judean society in the Hellenistic period and the formation of an ideologically complex society already in the second century BCE, see S. Schwartz (2001, pp. 1, 10–12, 14). On Hellenization in Judah as sharpening existing social gaps, see S. Schwartz (2001, pp. 23–24), and Gruen (2022, pp. 43–45, 49–52, 55–56), who emphasizes that the situation in Judah should not be viewed as a simple binary struggle, but as a field of local rivalries, internal conflicts, and ongoing attempts to negotiate between imperial power and regional autonomy.
- ³² On internal tensions within the Judean elite in the first half of the second century BCE, see 2 Macc. 3:4–6; 4:1–6; on the Tobiads, Josephus, *Ant.* 12.154–236.
- ³³ On the establishment of the gymnasium in Jerusalem, see 2 Macc. 4:7–10, 13–17, 23–25; Josephus, *Ant.* 12.237–41.
- ³⁴ On Hellenization as sharpening existing social differentiation rather than producing a simple binary division, see Gruen (2022, pp. 37, 41–42), and S. Schwartz (2001, pp. 31–33, 36). Eupolemus is adduced here only as an instance of this milieu, not as the author of Fragment 1 (see Section 6).
- ³⁵ On Greek education, cultural identity, and the position of Jewish-Greek historiographers such as Demetrius and Eupolemus as educated Greek-speaking Jewish authors, see Dhont (2020, pp. 222–27), esp. 225–27. Dhont argues that their Greek reflects standard post-classical usage and that such authors should be understood both as insiders in Jewish tradition and as participants in the Greek-speaking world.
- ³⁶ Adler’s discussion suggests that only from the Hasmonean period onward do we begin to see clear evidence for the Torah as a broad normative foundation, Jerusalem as the only legitimate sacrificial center, and the hardening of boundaries between Judeans and Samaritans.
- ³⁷ The central verses on which Tuval relies are Gen. 6:4; 10:8–9; 14:5; Num. 13:33; Deut. 1:28; Josh. 12:4; 13:12. In light of the connection between Pseudo-Eupolemus and the Septuagint, one should not exclude the possibility that he depends on the Septuagint in this context. In any case, the question remains unresolved why other texts dependent on the Septuagint do not reflect this tradition.

- ³⁸ Josephus (*Ant.* 1.72–73) was indeed reserved about mythology, yet explicitly acknowledged the similarity between the biblical story and the Greek myths about giants. Tuval (2016, pp. 53–54) explains that Philo’s repeated denial of the mythological dimension hints, on the one hand, at his acquaintance with the Jewish giant tradition, and on the other, at his distaste for its resemblance to Greek myths about giants and Titans.
- ³⁹ Stuckenbruck (2009, p. 302) argues that according to Jubilees too the spirits came out of the bodies of the giants. Werman (2015, pp. 255–57), however, notes that this claim does not appear explicitly in the text. Jubilees 10:1–8 and 49:9 seem close to this tradition, but rework it differently: the origin of the spirits lies in the watchers who took the daughters of men, and their spirits continue to act after the flood as a punishing and tempting force in God’s hand.
- ⁴⁰ On the sin of the watchers and the birth of the giants, see 1 Enoch 6–7; on the list of illicit knowledge taught by the watchers, including weapons, ornaments, sorcery, and forms of astrological or magical knowledge, see 1 Enoch 8; on the decree, the salvation of Noah, and the continued existence of the giants as evil spirits, see 1 Enoch 10; 15–16.
- ⁴¹ In the Animal Apocalypse, the watchers are represented as stars and the giants as large animals, especially elephants, camels, and donkeys; see 1 Enoch 86:4; 87:4; 88:2, 6. In 1 Enoch 89:6 the flood is described as final punishment for the giants: they sink in the water, cannot escape, and disappear from the post-flood story. Stuckenbruck emphasizes that the Animal Apocalypse stands in even sharper contrast to Pseudo-Eupolemus than do the *Book of Watchers* and the *Book of Giants*, because it leaves the giants no continuity after the flood, not even as evil spirits.
- ⁴² Stuckenbruck places the traditions concerning the watchers and giants within a broad discussion from the third to the first centuries BCE concerning the origin of culture and the origin of antediluvian evil. According to Stuckenbruck, the apocalyptic presentation of the watchers and giants as distinctly evil was not self-evident, but was shaped in engagement with other traditions concerning Gen. 6:1–4, including euhemeristic traditions that assigned the giants a more positive role in the history of culture and wisdom.
- ⁴³ For details concerning these sources, see the discussion of anti-Gerizim polemics above. See Schuller and Bernstein (2001, pp. 151–204, especially 171–72); Eshel (1991, pp. 125–36); Pummer (2009, pp. 18–22); Nati (2026, pp. 236–37, 249–54, 261). Schuller and Bernstein interpret 4Q372 1 as a composition in which “Joseph” represents the exiled northern tribes and propose identifying in the passage an anti-Samaritan polemic concerning the claim of the inhabitants of Shechem and Gerizim to Josephite identity. Nati has recently argued along similar lines that the composition’s anti-Samaritan polemic is organized around two related claims: that the inhabitants of the North are not the true descendants of Joseph, and that the sanctuary on Mount Gerizim is illegitimate. Even on this expanded reading, however, the polemic revolves around Joseph, Zion, exile, a “high place on a high mountain”, and Israelite identity.
- ⁴⁴ For Greek comparanda concerning Titans, giants, and the wider mythological background of Gen. 6:1–4, see Darshan (2014, pp. 155–78). For the integration and reworking of Mesopotamian traditions, especially around Gilgamesh and Humbaba, see Reeves (1992, pp. 119–20, 158 n. 365) and Goff (2009, pp. 221–53). For Levantine and northern traditions concerning Hermon and Lebanon, see Ben-Dov (2018–2019, pp. 189–204). For the Book of Giants in relation to Danielic traditions of arrogant rulers, judgment, and humbling, see Angel (2016, pp. 61–80).
- ⁴⁵ Translation is mine. See also Targum Yerushalmi to Deut. 2:11; 3:10 and b. Zev. 113b. In *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* another motif appears, recounting the presence of Abram son of Terah during the building of the tower in the city of Babylon, in a way that recalls the genealogical narrative in Pseudo-Eupolemus, according to which Abram is a descendant of the survivors of the flood, from the city of Ur, described as a city in Babylonia. For additional sources, see Ginzberg (Ginzberg [1909] 2003, 1:144, 1:146, 1:146 n. 35, 2:756 n. 697). For a survey of the motif of Og in Jewish aggadic literature, see Kosman (2002, pp. 157–90).
- ⁴⁶ Kister (2012, pp. 70–71), with respect to the interpretation of “sons of God” as angels, adds that “in this case, PRE represents the surfacing of myths in rabbinic literature after centuries of suppression”. See also Davidson (1915, pp. 54–56), for Saadia Gaon’s polemic against Hiwi al-Balkhi, which hints at a tradition of the survival of giants in the flood held by al-Balkhi.
- ⁴⁷ Josephus, *Ant.* 1.154–56, 167–68; Philo, *Abr.* 69ff., especially 69–72; Artapanus, *FGrH* 726 F 1, Eusebius, *Praep. ev.* 9.18.1; t. *Qidd.* 5:17; b. *Shabb.* 156a; b. *B. Bat.* 16b; *Gen. Rab.* 44:10.
- ⁴⁸ Doran’s argument is complicated, however, by the wording of Fragment 1, where Abraham is said to have taught the Phoenicians the turnings of the sun and the moon “and all other such things” (καὶ τὰ ἄλλα πάντα), and similarly later in the fragment in the list of what Abraham then taught the Egyptians.
- ⁴⁹ The Greek text of the two fragments follows Dindorf (1867).

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