stands for a divinity, if perhaps a minor one, whether or not labeled with the term "god(dess)." One is reminded of the optional use of the divine determinative with various pieces of temple equipment in Mesopotamian and Hittite rituals. As for the pairing of Yahweh with a goddess, Tikva Frymer-Kensky (*In the Wake of the Goddesses* [New York: Free Press, 1992) has emphasized the difficulties that arise when a monotheistic religion assigns humanlike character and gender to its sole god. Aspects of life more naturally attributed to beings of the excluded gender (e.g., motherhood in the case of the God of Israel) can be accommodated only awkwardly in conceptions of the universal deity. The evidence from ancient Israel strongly suggests that this problem had not yet arisen in the pre-exilic period.

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Gary Beckman
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

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Abraham Tal. *A Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic*. Handbuch der Orientalistik. Leiden: Brill, 2000. 2 vols. xxxiv, מ, 967 pp.

The field of Aramaic studies has witnessed a steady stream of major developments in recent years. Important new volumes include M. Sokoloff, *A Dictionary of Palestinian Jewish Aramaic* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1990); J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1995); and T. Muraoka and B. Porten, *A Grammar of Egyptian Aramaic* (Leiden: Brill, 1998).[1] Two classics have been reprinted by Eisenbrauns: J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Oxford, 1903; repr. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998); and T. Nöldeke, *Compendious Syriac Grammar* (London, 1904; repr. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001). In addition, the *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon* web site has been launched (http://cal1.cn .huc.edu/index.html), with various databases currently available and with the promise for more online resources.

To this bounty of material, especially in the area of Aramaic lexicography, we now may add the work under review, Abraham Tal's *A Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic*. Professor Tal has been the most active researcher in the field of Samaritan studies for several decades, having inherited that position from his venerable teacher, the doyen of all Samaritan studies, Zeʾev Ben-ayyim. Tal's dictionary is the crowning achievement of a lifetime of study into the language and literature of this tiny yet important religious community.

The body of this dictionary is written in Hebrew. Thus, for example, each Aramaic word is glossed with its modern Hebrew equivalent; each text cited is followed by a Hebrew rendering; additional discussion of specific points is in Hebrew; sources and bibliographic information are presented in Hebrew; and so on.

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1. For my reviews of the first two of these works, see, respectively, *AJS Review* 17 (1992), pp. 296–99; and *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118 (1998), pp. 96–97.

To aid the English reader, each entry includes an English gloss as well; further-more, many (though not all) of the cited texts include English renderings along-side the Hebrew renderings.[2] The detailed Introduction is presented in both En-glish and Hebrew, though, quite oddly, slightly different information is conveyed in the two versions.

Tal describes in clear terms the major problem facing the compiler of a dic-tionary of Samaritan Aramaic. As with the Jews, so with the Samaritans: the con-tact between Aramaic and Hebrew throughout the centuries creates a very thorny problem for the lexicographer. Are Hebrew words in Aramaic to be considered true loanwords, and therefore fodder for a dictionary of Aramaic; or are they to be treat-ed as pure Hebrew words invoked by the author of a particular composition, some-times even subconsciously? Tal notes two different periods of contact between the two languages. The first is the Second Temple period, when both Hebrew and Ara-maic were "living languages, coexisting as vernaculars" among the Samaritans (p. xii). The second is the medieval period, when both languages no longer were spoken—the Samaritans adopted Arabic as the vernacular by the eleventh centu-ry C.E. Tal argues convincingly that Hebrew words borrowed into Aramaic during the first period should be included in the dictionary, just as loanwords into any liv-ing language should be included in a dictionary of said language. For the medieval period, however, generally Tal opts not to include Hebrew words that appear with-in Aramaic compositions, especially lexical items which appear randomly. He pre-sents such examples as an occasional attestation of ברח for Aramaic ערק, שוב for Aramaic חזר, and מקום for Aramaic אתר. In these cases, the Hebrew term does not displace the Aramaic term, nor is it used for a special nuance, but rather it simply occurs in a poem or hymn written by an author or copied by a copyist at a time when "no solid distinction between Hebrew and Aramaic was made" (p. xiv).

To a lesser extent, the same problem arises with the occasional Arabic word that appears within an Aramaic composition. Again, Tal is conservative in his judgment, choosing typically not to include such words. Tal notes another com-plicating factor: that our oldest Samaritan manuscript dates to 1204 C.E. That is to say, even for our oldest Samaritan texts, such as the Targum to the Torah, clearly authored in late antiquity, we possess very late copies in which occasional Ara-bisms appear. Obviously, these lexemes cannot be considered truly representative of Samaritan Aramaic. This is not to say, however, that Tal excludes all Arabic words. When in his judgment an Arabism within Samaritan Aramaic is determined to be a loanword, Tal includes the word, with reference to the dictionaries of either Lane or Dozy for further information on the lexeme.

In the fourteenth and especially the fifteenth century, a great renaissance of Samaritan literature occurred, with the resultant new literary language, "a kind of artificially constructed conglomerate of Aramaic and Hebrew with heavy traces of Arabic" (p. xiii). Given the even greater problems inherent in sifting Aramaic material from texts of this period, Tal utilizes sources from only the thirteenth cen-tury and earlier.

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2. Tal informs the reader (p. xxv, p. כא) that Steven Fassberg of the Hebrew University checked the English material for greater accuracy.

The main sources for this dictionary, accordingly, are a) the Targum, b) the great midrashic composition known as the Tibat Marqe (or Memar Marqa), c) the liturgy (prayers, etc.), and d) chronicles such as the book of Asatir and the Tulida. In all cases, Tal utilizes the best manuscripts available, especially those published during the past sixty years by Ben-ayyim, Tal, and Moshe Florentin (representing three generations of Samaritanists in Israeli academe). In addition, as would be expected, Tal cites the great late medieval Samaritan multilingual dictionary *Ha-Meliṣ* wherever relevant.

Note, however, that Tal has not included Samaritan inscriptions in his database; it is not clear to me why this is so. I was able to identify at least one lexical item attested in an inscription that is not included in Tal's work, namely, the loanword פרקסנה (< Greek πρόξενος) "patron, benefactor" appearing in line 3 of the Ramat Aviv synagogue inscription.[3]

The dictionary also includes proper names, for which Tal has provided the traditional Samaritan pronunciation in transliterated form, e.g., משה *mūši*.

The appearance of a major reference work such as this dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic is by itself a significant contribution to the world of scholarship. Samaritanists and Aramaicists obviously will use this dictionary for decades to come. But one should not think that scholars in other fields cannot benefit from it as well. Thus, before concluding, I want to present one small example of how I as primarily a biblical scholar already have put Tal's work to good use. I recently was pondering the difficult verse of Ps 32:9, in particular the obscure phrase עדיו לבלום with the *hapax legomenon* בלם. The first word normally means "his ornament" (cf. Ezek 7:20), and probably it can mean that here, too, with reference to the preceding phrase מתג ורסן "bit and bridle." The second word is known from various Aramaic dialects and means "stop, block." Presumably the phrase refers to the manner in which the rider utilizes the mouthpiece to halt the horse's progress. But I would go further and propose that a complex wordplay is present here. The first word also can be taken from the homonymous root עדה I "pass, move" (and not עדה II "bedeck"); thus עדיו = "his movement," and the phrase also means "to block his movement." Furthermore, in Samaritan Aramaic—and only in this dialect of Aramaic, as far as I can determine—the root בלם has a second nuance, namely "be foolish," as noted by Tal on p. 100. The evidence comes from the Samaritan Targum to Deut 32:5 where בלם is used to render Hebrew עקש "be perverse," and from *Ha-Meliṣ* which glosses the root with Hebrew שטה "be stupid." When one recalls that the main thought expressed in Ps 32:9 אל תהיו כסוס כפרד אין הבין ("do not be like the horse and the mule without understanding"), one appreciates the delightful wordplay inherent in this verse. I am employing here the comparative philological method, with the assumption that both senses of the root בלם existed in ancient Hebrew as well. Clearly the poet selected this rare verb intentionally, in order to evoke both meanings, "stop, block" and "be foolish." Note, moreover, that while polysemy is a characteristic of all Hebrew poetry (and much prose as well), there

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3. For a recent treatment of this inscription, see R. Pummer, "Samaritan Material Remains and Archaeology," in A. D. Crown, ed., *The Samaritans* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1989), pp. 144–145.

is an even greater propensity for multiplicity of meaning specifically where the reader is charged to be intelligent. My treatment of these few words in the book of Psalms is hardly a major issue in biblical scholarship, but it demonstrates the point nonetheless. Without Tal's *Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic* at my disposal, I would not have encountered בלם "be foolish," whose application to Ps 32:9 allows the reader to marvel at the ability of the ancient Israelite wordsmith.

I must register one criticism of this dictionary, namely, the unpleasing nature of the visual layout of the entries. There is insufficient distinction in the various fonts, sizes, and styles of the Hebrew characters, especially between the Samaritan Aramaic text citations and the Modern Hebrew renderings. This lack of variation prevents the reader from easily scanning an entry to locate the desired information.

We congratulate Professor Tal on this major accomplishment, two decades in the making.

Gary A. Rendsburg
Cornell University
Ithaca, New York

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Nili Sacher Fox. *In the Service of the King: Officialdom in Ancient Israel and Judah.* Monographs of the Hebrew Union College 23. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2000. xvi, 367 pp.

Fox's objective is "to refine current definitions of titles of royal functionaries and their roles in the monarchic state-organization and to create a tentative reconstruction of the government structure" (p. 269). Secondarily, she questions whether "Israelite officialdom and administrative practices were modeled after foreign prototypes" (p. 276f).

Fox considers the Bible "the most substantial and comprehensive account" (p. ix) for the evaluation of Israelite social history, consisting of authentic documents and ideology-oriented interpretations. Construing Israel's social history means, according to Fox, to supplement the Biblical texts with extra-biblical epigraphic evidence. Her approach is Bible-centered, Israel-centered, and traditions-oriented. This approach is not universally shared any longer (Edelman, 1991[1]; Grabbe, 1997[2]; Niemann, 2001[3]; Knauf, 2001[4]).

1. Edelman, D. V. (ed.) 1991: *The Fabric of History. Text, Artifact and Israel's Past.* JSOT.S 127, Sheffield.

2. Grabbe, L. L. (ed.) 1997: *Can a 'History of Israel' Be Written?,* JSOT.S 245 = ESHM 1, Sheffield.

3. Niemann, H. M. 2001: 'Von Oberflächen, Schichten und Strukturen. Was leistet die Archäologie für die Erforschung der Geschichte Israels und Judas?' In: Christof Hardmeier (ed.), *Steine-Bilder-Texte. Historische Evidenz ausserbiblischer und biblischer Quellen.* Arbeiten zur Bibel und ihrer Geschichte, 5. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt: 79–121.

4. Knauf, E. A. 2001: 'History, Archaeology, and the Bible.' *Theologische Zeitschrift* 57/2: 262–68.