The so-called Samaritan tenth commandment deals with one of the most central precepts of Samaritan theology, namely, the centralization of worship on Mount Gerizim. A composite text, it draws on Deuteronomy 11 and 27 and includes the command to build an altar on Mount Gerizim. This passage is repeated in both versions of the SP’s Decalogue and establishes the veneration of Mount Gerizim as an integral part of the laws revealed on Mount Sinai.

The tenth commandment has been characterized primarily as a sectarian change interpolated into a Jewish textual tradition that circulated in Israel in the late Second Temple Period. This so-called pre-Samaritan tradition is documented in a small group of Pentateuchal scrolls from Qumran and contains significant editorial changes familiar with the Samaritan Pentateuch. Nonetheless, the tenth commandment does not appear in these scrolls. Its absence from the findings at Qumran as well as the fact that the location of the secret site of worship is the most important difference between Judaism and Samaritanism, has led scholars to conclude that the tenth commandment belonged to a thin layer of sectarian changes that pertained to the centralization of the cult site. The “Samaritan” layer was interpolated into the pre-Samaritan tradition when the latter was adopted by the Samaritans as the base text of their authoritative Pentateuch.

In recent years, scholars have increasingly undermined the widely accepted model of the textual development of the SP. Edmon Gallagher, for instance, has questioned whether a “Samaritan” layer exists in the text. Stefan Schorch, in turn, has demonstrated that the tenth commandment is not a sectarian textual divergence, but rather originated in the circles of scribes who made the pre-Samaritan additions to the text. According to both scholars, the textual divergences associated with the so-called “Samaritan” layer already existed in the Jewish, pre-Samaritan tradition.

This paper focuses on the tenth commandment, the most prominent reading of the “Samaritan” layer. Whether this passage is or is not a sectarian reading is greatly influenced by whether it was originally included in 4QpaleoExodm, also known as 4Q22, the longest preserved pre-Samaritan scroll. It shares several expansions and duplications with the SP and thus represents the expansionist text-type of the Book of Exodus, of which the SP is a later exemplar. However, as the text of the Decalogue was not preserved in 4Q22, the question of whether the scroll agrees with the SP’s version of the Decalogue remains unanswered.

This paper sheds new light on this question, using material reconstruction of the relevant columns of 4Q22. The reconstruction indicates that the tenth commandment to build an altar on Mount Gerizim was probably included in 4Q22 and should therefore not be discarded from the pre-Samaritan layer. Put differently, the tenth commandment is not a sectarian reading but rather existed in the Jewish tradition adopted by the Samaritans. These findings have implications both on the textual development of the SP and the textual history of the Decalogue.

4Q22 attests to the same textual SP tradition as it contains most of the major features that characterize the SP-Exod.

In all cases save Chapter 27, a certain quantity of the text in Exodus was copied from parallel accounts in Deuteronomy. In Chapter 27, the added material was taken from Exodus 39:1, which describes the making of the priestly vestments.

As stated, the assumption that the tenth commandment is not included in 4Q22 heavily influenced the designation of the tenth commandment as a purely ideological Samaritan change. However, this has recently been questioned.

Albeit not claiming that the tenth commandment belongs to the pre-Samaritan tradition, Molly Zahn has pointed out that this section shows very close connections to the hermeneutical perspective reflected in other pre-Samaritan expansions.

These variants may affect the reconstruction slightly but would probably not change the conclusion regarding the tenth commandment since they usually involve a limited amount of text.

The textual fluidity of Exod 20 is specifically evident in other Qumran manuscripts—4Q158 and 4Q175—that preserve this text. The passage describing Moses acting as a mediator during the theophany on Sinai is documented in these manuscripts, but in versions that differ from the SP.

The Decalogue circulated in various versions in the late Second Temple Period. Two versions are documented in the MT—in Exod 20 and Deut 5. In addition, readings unknown in the MT are attested in Qumran scrolls. Some of them are also reflected in LXX—probably indicating that the translators of LXX used a Hebrew *Vorlage* whose text differed in places from that of the MT. In addition, Innocent Himbaza posits that some readings of LXX and Peshitta reflect early interpretations of the Decalogue. The Decalogue can also be found in the Nash Papyrus of the second or the first century BCE (Albright 1937, 149), which is close to LXXB in terms of its textual affiliation (Jastram, THB 2.2.5.2). It is also documented in second- and first-century-BCE phylacteries and mezuzoth discovered in the Judean Desert. Tov notes that the phylacteries and mezuzoth may have been written from memory, as *b. Meg.* (18b) states. Therefore, they can only be limited materials for the text criticism of the scriptural Decalogue. Nonetheless, they do provide evidence of its reception and wide circulation in the late Second Temple Period.

The findings presented today are in line with the textual plurality and fluidity of scriptural texts in the late Second Temple Period in general, and the Decalogue in particular. In antiquity, the Decalogue lay at the core of the Jewish legal tradition. Its sheer importance most likely influenced its textual plurality and the proliferation of its interpretation. I have shown that yet another Jewish version of the Decalogue apparently existed in the pre-Samaritan tradition, one that incorporated the Shechemist tradition and existed alongside other versions. We must therefore not assume that there was one fixed Hebrew text of the Decalogue in the late Second Temple Period. Quite the contrary—the Decalogue was a fluid text that was repeatedly developed, reshaped, rewritten, and re-interpreted throughout the course of its transmission.