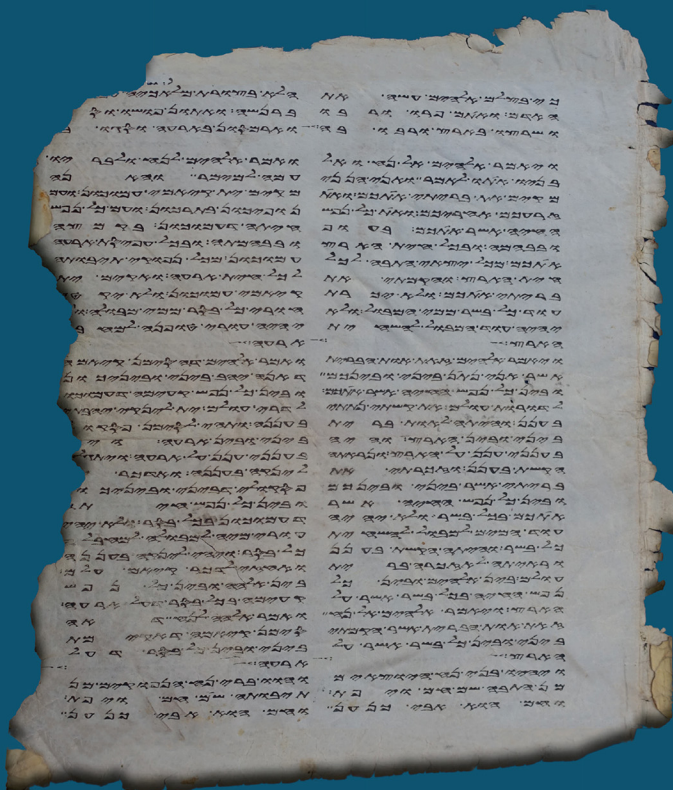


The Samaritan Pentateuch

An English Translation with a Parallel Annotated Hebrew Text

MOSHE FLORENTIN AND ABRAHAM TAL



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

Faculty of Asian and Middle
Eastern Studies



<https://www.openbookpublishers.com>

©2024 Moshe Florentin and Abraham Tal



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0). This license allows you to share, copy, distribute, and transmit the text; to adapt the text for non-commercial purposes of the text providing attribution is made to the authors (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work). Attribution should include the following information:

Moshe Florentin and Abraham Tal, *The Samaritan Pentateuch: An English Translation with a Parallel Annotated Hebrew Text*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0415>

Further details about CC BY-NC licenses are available at
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

All external links were active at the time of publication unless otherwise stated and have been archived via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at <https://archive.org/web>

Any digital material and resources associated with this volume will be available at
<https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0415#resources>

Semitic Languages and Cultures 30

ISSN (print): 2632-6906

ISSN (digital): 2632-6914

ISBN Paperback: 978-1-80511-353-9

ISBN Hardback: 978-1-80511-354-6

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-80511-355-3

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0415

Cover image: Garrett Collection (Princeton University library) Samaritan 48, p.1. Right column: Gen. 9:6b – 18. Left column: Aramaic Targum of these verses.

Cover design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

The fonts used in this volume are Charis SIL, SBL Hebrew, SBL Greek and Scheherazade New.

3.0. The Question of the Samaritan Pentateuch's Unity

3.1. Manuscript Similarity

When comparing the many manuscripts of SP, one is immediately struck by how similar they are. The critical editions produced by August Freiherrn von Gall and Stefan Schorch (see fn. 50) provide few variants, most of which involve *plene* and defective spellings; the rest concern punctuation (see below, §4.1.1.1), several scribal marks (see below, §4.1.2.6) and occasional fluctuations in gutturals. Otherwise, the manuscripts do not differ much from one another.

3.2. Direct Evidence of Variants

Samaritan scholars were aware of different versions of SP and even went so far as to compose variant lists (*LOT* II:405–23). One of these lists has survived, albeit in a very fragmentary state, and bears witness to what they believed was a very ancient manuscript. Examples of variants reported in this list include ‘and in the fourteenth (year)’ / ‘ובארבע עשר’ (Gen. 14.5); ‘in Ham’ (MT בְּחָם) / בחום (ibid.); ‘and he turned them back’ / ‘וישוב’ (Gen. 15.11); ‘will return (3MPL) here’ / ‘ישוב הנה’ (the former similar to MT Gen. 15.16); ‘angel’ / מַלְאֲכִי (Gen. 16.7); ‘and let us go back’ / ‘ונשוב’ (the former identical to MT Num. 14.4); ‘and (the earth) closed (over them)’ / ותכסה (Num. 16.33); ‘(lest) it swallow us’ / תבלענו (Num. 16.34); ‘and there you (MPL) shall come’ / ובאתם שם (Deut. 12.5). As noted, some variants are reminiscent of MT. They must not lead us to conclude too hastily, however, that SP and MT were closer in the past, nor that SP developed from MT, since the evidence from this list is limited and fragmentary. From the portion that did survive, the variants that are identical to those found in MT appear to be random.

3.3. Indirect Evidence of Variants

In addition to the direct evidence, there is also indirect evidence for the existence of now lost versions of SP. They show that for much of the history of SP, different versions circulated in manuscripts that differed from one another in their sources, interpretations, laws, and language, and only at the end of an extended process did these crystallise into the current form of SP, which is still not entirely homogenous. The variants were expunged from the manuscripts of SP and only unimportant spelling variants remained.

The Aramaic evidence from ST shows that in the past—possibly the very distant past—the Samaritans preserved versions of SP that were eventually rejected and forgotten, leaving their mark only in these translations.⁴³ They deviate from the mainstream Samaritan tradition, i.e., the version of SP venerated by the community today, and its accepted interpretation, exhibiting a literary stratum that is no longer preserved by the Samaritan community. Here follow some examples. The verb יִשַׁת *yāšāt* ‘pleases’ as in ‘if it pleases your mind’ (Gen. 23.8) is a 3FSG perfect of a root whose first radical is a *yod*. As such, it is usually translated in ST אֶת־רִיחַת. However, MS C (Nablu 6), the manuscript presented in our edition, reads אִית ית, which corresponds to the version of this verse found in MT (with יִשַׁת), but not to the Hebrew column found in the manuscript.

⁴³ In manuscripts that have an Aramaic translation in a column next to the Hebrew original, the two texts do not always correspond. That is, the Aramaic translation is not a translation of the text presented beside it, but rather was copied from another book, which was translated from a different Hebrew original.

In Gen. 30.2, which in MT reads as ‘withheld from you (מִמֶּךָ) the fruit of the womb’, we find in SP ‘withheld from your bowels (ממעִיד) the fruit of the womb’, which is translated in some manuscripts of ST as מן חקריִך (חקר = עקר ‘belly’). On the other hand, there are other manuscripts (MSS J, E, and C) that translate as מניִך, corresponding to the text found in MT.⁴⁴ In Gen. 34.1, according to MT, we read ‘to see the daughters of the land’. The verb ‘to see’ (לִרְאוֹת) is active, but in SP it is passive and pronounced *lěrrāot* (a *nif‘al* infinitive), which accords with the context: ‘to meet with (or ‘to be seen by’) the daughters of the land’. It is translated accordingly in most manuscripts of ST, i.e., למתחזא. But two manuscripts of ST (MSS A and C) translate instead למחזי, which evidently represents the *qal* form equivalent to MT—this despite the fact that the Hebrew columns of both these manuscripts present the same Hebrew verb found in the rest of the manuscripts of SP (see our comments *ad loc.*).

Samaritan pronunciation of the word שם distinguishes between two meanings: ‘name’ is pronounced *šam*, while ‘reputation’ is realised as *šem*. For example, in Gen. 41.45, one finds *šam*: ‘Faru called Yusef’s name’, while in Gen. 11.4, *šem* occurs: ‘let us make for ourselves a reputation’. The form מִשֵּׁם in MT Gen 49.24 ‘From there is the shepherd, the stone of Israel’ is realised in SP as *miššām* ‘from the name’.⁴⁵ This is also borne out by ST, which usually translates the passage שם מן or משם. Three manuscripts of ST (MSS M, J, and B), however, read מתמן, an adverb corresponding to the text found in MT (one cannot learn from their spelling how the word was pronounced at the time). In SP the equivalent adverb is always pronounced *šamma* (see above), so that it is clear that the *Vorlage* of the translation מתמן was not the same as what we find in SP today.

⁴⁴ Indeed, the Hebrew column of MS J reads ממִיך, while that of MS Nablus 6 (C) reads ממעִיד. MS E has no Hebrew column.

⁴⁵ The split of שם into two different lexical forms is representative of a much broader phenomenon that is one of the defining characteristics of Samaritan Hebrew. Examples can be found in Florentin (1995; 1996). A list of such words is presented in the ‘Index of Differentiations in Meaning’.

In Exod. 3.10, where MT has the imperative **וְהוֹצֵאתָ** ‘bring forth (my people)’, SP has a converted imperfect **וְהוֹצֵאתָ** ‘that you may bring forth (my people)’. Most manuscripts of ST translate the verb with the corresponding imperfect **וְהִפֵּק**, but one (MS E) translates it with the imperative **וְהִפֵּק**, corresponding to MT (MS E has no Hebrew column). A similar case is found in Num. 20.26, where MT has an imperative **וְהִפַּשְׁטָה** ‘and strip!’, while SP has a converted perfect **וְהִפַּשְׁטָה** ‘and you will strip’. Most manuscripts of ST translate the verb with the imperfect **וְהִשְׁלַח**, but one (MS J) has the imperative **וְהִשְׁלַח**, as in MT.⁴⁶

In Exod. 16.4 ‘whether (the people) will walk in my laws’, MT has a 3MSG verb **הִלֵּךְ**, while SP has the 3CPL verb **הִלְכוּ**. A number of manuscripts of ST translate the verb with 3CPL verbs **הִיאָבוּ**, **הִיָּהָבוּ**, **הָא יִזְלוּ**, but others (MSS C, J, and V) have the 3MSG **הִיָּהָךְ**, as in MT, despite the fact that their Hebrew columns have the same 3CPL verb found in the rest of the manuscripts of SP. Lev. 4.14, according to SP, reads ‘the assembly shall offer a young bull without blemish for a sin offering’, while in MT the word **תָּמִים** ‘without blemish’ is absent. This word is translated as **שָׁלֵם** in all manuscripts of ST, except one (MS J), from which it is absent, just as in MT.

An especially glaring case is the variant in Gen. 2.2 discussed above (§2.2.1.2). SP reads ‘And God finished on the sixth day his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done’, while MT reads ‘seventh day’ instead of ‘sixth day.’ Though most manuscripts of ST follow SP in translating ‘sixth day,’ one manuscript (MS C [Nabius 6]) translates the verse וַיְהִי עֶבֶד ה' בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי [עבד ה' ביום השביעי]. While the manuscript is fragmentary in this place, the final letters of the word in question can be made out clearly and correspond to the text as found in MT.

⁴⁶ Or perhaps this is a scribal error, since *'alef* and *tav* are graphically similar in the Samaritan script.

Not all the deviations from the ‘mainstream’ of SP found in ST, however, reveal a *Vorlage* akin to MT. For example, in Exod. 23.7 ‘I will not acquit the wicked’, the verb ‘acquit’, which in MT is spelled אַצְדִּיק, appears in many manuscripts of SP as הַצְדִּיק. Ostensibly, the appearance of an *’alef* in place of a *he* is not surprising in the context of a community among whom gutturals are not pronounced. Indeed, the pronunciation of the imperfect form of the *hif’il* is *ašdaq* and many manuscripts of ST translate the phrase accordingly as לֹא אֶזְכֶּה חַיִּב. There are manuscripts of ST, however, whose translators knew of a different pronunciation, i.e., *aššādaq*, a noun with the definite article *he*, equivalent to MT הַצְדִּיק ‘the righteous’. They translated the phrase לֹא זִכָּה חַיִּב.

In Lev. 15.18 ‘And the woman with whom a man lies with seed of copulation, they shall both bathe themselves in water, and be unclean until the evening’, the word for ‘man’ appears as אִישָׁה *iša* ‘her husband’ in SP, as opposed to MT אִישׁ ‘a man’. The change represents the addition of a 3FSG pronoun, so that it translates as ‘with whom her man lies’. This clarifies that the verse refers only to married couples, and thus that the sin of adultery may not be removed by just washing. Lev. 20.10 had already prescribed the death penalty for both parties who commit adultery. ST translates Lev. 15.18 in accordance with SP, i.e., with a 3FSG pronoun: וְאִתָּהּ דִּישְׁכַּב גְּבֵרָה עִמָּה ‘and a woman with whom her husband lies’. One of the oldest manuscripts of ST (MS M), however, reads גֵּבֶר ‘a man’, without the pronoun. The same also occurs in v. 24, where the issue is sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman.⁴⁷

It is not only through ST that one may see materially different versions and variant pronunciations. An illuminating example can be found in Num. 23.10 ‘the dust of Jacob’, which in SP is spelled מַעְפֵּר יַעֲקֹב (MT יַעֲקֹב). The appearance of erasures and reworkings in the manuscripts and the explicit oral testimony that variant pronunciations existed in the synagogues are evidence for the existence of competing versions (see our comment *ad loc.*).

⁴⁷ Note that MT’s *nota accusativi* אִתָּהּ that follows the verb יִשְׁכַּב ‘lies’ is pronounced *itta* in SH, identical in pronunciation to אִתָּהּ ‘with her’. The same can be found in SP in Gen. 26.10; 34.7; and Num. 5.13, 19 in order to harmonise the text with other places in which both versions reflect שְׁכַב עִמָּה.

3.4. The Extant Manuscripts

These examples are ample evidence that there was not always only one version of SP. Thus, a question arises regarding the antiquity of the version of SP that we know today. Unfortunately, no manuscript of SP predating the 11th century has survived and so a definite answer to this question cannot be given. The Samaritan chronicles describe a number of periods in which the community was led by charismatic leaders who exerted great influence on the spiritual life of the community. We know, for example, of the activities of Baba Rabba in the 4th century CE,⁴⁸ who was spiritually and materially influential. His deeds are well known to the community, because they were documented. Yet no one knows if it was he or one of his contemporaries who codified the version of SP that is current today. The sources that have come down to us describing his actions were written centuries after he had died and do not speak of canonisation during this period.

Another time in which the canonisation of SP may have taken place was during the leadership of the High Priest Phineas in the 14th century CE. This was a period of major cultural and prolific literary activity in the community. It was then that important liturgical writings were composed, some in eloquent Hebrew, others in good Aramaic. It is thus probable that the rituals and readings practised to this day in Samaritan synagogues were, to a great extent, established then. Is it not then reasonable to assume that this was also the period in which the text of the Pentateuch read in the synagogue was codified,⁴⁹ i.e., that an authoritative version for study and synagogue ritual was produced?

⁴⁸ Some say the 3rd century CE. For a discussion of this personality see Stenhouse (1993, 37–38). His deeds are described in the Samaritan chronicle entitled *Tulida*; see Florentin (1992, 88–89, 199). These were also described at length in the chronicle of Abu 'l-Fath; see Stenhouse (1985, 175–205).

⁴⁹ There are also many indications of such 'deviations' in the 11th-century Arabic translation of أبو الحسن الصوري (Abu l-Ḥasan aṣ-Ṣūri). But this translation was influenced, as many have claimed, by Saadia Gaon's *Tafsir*, so that there is no certainty that these stem from a different version of SP available to him. The matter requires further study.

At any rate, one of the reasons we chose to present the reader with MS no. 6 (C) is the occasional uniqueness in some of its readings., which is manifest in many of its readings. Still, it must be stressed that it is generally no different from any other manuscript found in Samaritan communities and in libraries around the world, either in its religious-ideological spirit, its linguistic forms, or even its editorial tendencies. Thus, despite its idiosyncrasies—which are sometimes shared with other manuscripts of SP—it is well suited to represent the Samaritan tradition.

4.0. The Edition before Us: The Hebrew Original and Its English Translation

4.1. The Hebrew Original

4.1.1. Method of Presentation of the Hebrew Text

4.1.1.1. The Absence of an Authoritative Written Samaritan *Textus Receptus* and the Centrality of Oral Tradition

In order to present properly the translation of the Pentateuch venerated by the Samaritan community, we decided to put it alongside the Hebrew original, the same original we presented in our Hebrew edition, which compared SP and MT (Tal and Florentin 2010). It must be stressed, however, that there is no single authoritative written Samaritan *textus receptus* used by the community. Perhaps it was the loving and reverent attention the community gave to the meticulous oral transmission of the Pentateuch from generation to generation, a tradition that persists to our very day, that led to the view that the physical copying of SP was of secondary importance. Thus, Samaritan scribes felt themselves free from strict writing conventions, which may even never have been formulated. They were free to add or remove letters, especially *matres lectionis* (see below, §4.1.1.4). The community had always been focused on the accurate *oral* reading of the text and not its *graphic* representation. As we have seen above, there is no single immutable text of SP