The Samaritan Pentateuch in Current Research: Characterization, Tools, and Methods

The Samaritan Pentateuch (SP) is the authoritative text of the Samaritan sect and the only comprehensive Hebrew version of the Pentateuch we have, besides MT. Until the middle of the 20th century, it was mostly considered a sectarian text whose contribution to the textual criticism of the Pentateuch was limited. However, over the last several decades, mainly as a result of the impact of the DSS, a consensus has grown that SP is an important source for our understanding of the textual history of the Pentateuch in the late Second Temple period. In fact, Samaritan studies are one of the current trends in Biblical scholarship and have become significant both for the study of the Pentateuch and the study of the Persian and Hellenistic periods.

In today’s session, the first of the series on SP and its importance for textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, I will focus on the study of SP itself, while in later sessions I will discuss the ancient manuscripts associated with the same textual tradition as SP, that is, the pre-Samaritan scrolls from Qumran, and the relation between these scrolls and SP. (slide) I will begin with the historical background of the Samaritan sect and then discuss the textual characterization of SP, the background of its formation, and its textual and oral transmission. I will then elaborate on Samaritan manuscript culture, an issue that has not yet drawn much scholarly attention. Finally, I will reflect on modern editions of SP, reviewing the major critical editions of SP and conclude by discussing the new comprehensive SP edition, which is an outstandingly useful tool for researchers.

# Who are the Samaritans?

The origin of the Samaritans is a subject of controversy between Jews and Samaritans. Jewish accounts, characterized by 2 Kings 17 and Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* 9), claim that the Samaritans are descendants of colonists brought into the region of Samaria by the Assyrians from other lands that they had conquered, including Cuthah. This is the origin of the Rabbinic designation of Samaritans as Cutheans (כותים). The Jewish account of the veneer of Israelite religion displayed by the Samaritans is that it is the result of instruction by an Israelite priest repatriated from Assyria after the colonists had been attacked by lions sent by God. The Samaritans unsurprisingly reject this story and insist that they are “the genuine Israel,” namely, the direct descendants of the northern Israelite tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, who survived the destruction of the Northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians in 722 BCE.

Archeological evidence and epigraphic remains from the last few decades have made fundamental contributions to research on the Samaritans. Yitzhak Magen and his team performed archeological excavations on Mount Gerizim starting in 1982 and continuing over the next twenty years. These excavations revealed the presence of a sanctuary on Mount Gerizim from as early as the middle of the fifth century BCE. This sanctuary was Yahwistic, that is, dedicated to the same God as the Jerusalem temple, and presumably with many similar rituals. The inscriptional evidence, including 395 inscriptions and fragments of inscriptions in Hebrew and Aramaic from the Persian and the early Hellenistic periods as well as several inscriptions in Greek, suggests that the residents of the region of Samaria wrote and spoke the same language as the Judeans. They had a similar system of scripts and similar onomastica. The similar onomastica, particularly the use of Yahwistic names, is attested to also in papyri and coins found in the region from the fifth and the fourth centuries BCE (Knoppers 2010, “Aspects of Samaria’s Religious Culture”). These archeological and epigraphic findings indicate that Judah and Samaria were two provinces that shared close cultural and religious ties in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. Moreover, the Yahwistic community in Samarian can be traced back to the fifth century BCE and shows some historical continuity. Under the circumstances, it does not seem likely that Yahwism in Samaria was a late arrival or that the Yahwists in Samaria were a late breakaway group from Judah.

Presumably, the northern Yahwists later became the Samaritans. The Pentateuch shared by Jews and Samaritans was a part of a broader system of mutual influence between the two communities that were concentrated in the regions of Judah and Samaria in the Persian period. In fact, real estrangement between the two communities did not begin until the rise of the Hasmoneans. This estrangement was been highly influenced by the destruction, in 111/110 or 128 BCE, of the temple on Mount Gerizim by John Hyrcanus, who was the leader of Judah and at the same time the High priest of the temple in Jerusalem. The destruction of the temple led to the emergence of a Jerusalem-focused Judaism versus a Mount Gerizim-focused Samaritanism as two distinct communities in opposition to each other.

The Samaritans exist to this day. From antiquity and throughout the Middle Ages, there were Samaritan communities in Nablus at the foot of Mount Gerizim, in Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo, Gaza, and elsewhere. Since the seventeenth century, only the community in Nablus has survived. The Samaritan population has been reduced over the years and numbered only 140 people in the early twentieth century. Today, it has slightly recovered, numbering several hundred people living in two communities – Nablus and Holon, a suburb of Tel-Aviv (slide).

# Textual Characterization of SP

The discovery of the pre-Samaritan scrolls revealed that SP represents a text of the Pentateuch which circulated in Israel in the 2nd century BCE. The SP can be characterized overall as an expansive text. Its main characteristic, which is also evident in the pre-Samaritan scrolls, is the major editorial changes that are not shared with MT and LXX. These editorial changes are concentrated in narrative blocks. They often occur in parallel, but different, versions of the same story that appear in different places in the Pentateuch. The two versions were combined into one story so that they no longer represent two distinctive accounts. Other expansions stem from the need to present divine commands or prohibitions before actions involving those commands or prohibitions are performed. The major expansions will be extensively discussed in the next session of this series. Today, I will discuss minor variants in SP that can be divided into four categories: (1) small harmonizing changes; (2) small clarifying additions; (3) substitutions of rare words or forms with more familiar ones; (4) linguistic emendations.

## 2.1 Small Harmonizing Changes

This category includes minor alterations designed to solve contradictions or to create better harmony in the text. (slide) A well-known example of such a reading in SP is found in Gen 2:2 (slide): ויכל אלהים ביום השביעי מלאכתו אשר עשה וישבת ביום השביעי מכל מלאכתו אשר עשה. Since Genesis chapter 1 says that creation was finished on the sixth day, the text can hardly go on to say that God concluded it on the seventh day. In addition, if He indeed concluded the creation on the seventh day, how could he cease from all his works on the same day? Both SP and the LXX read here ויכל אלהים ביום השישי, probably as a result of a deliberate emendation assuming the number is an error, thus resolving the contradiction arising from the verse as it appears in MT. However, some scholars, such as Ronald Hendel, believe that SP and the LXX preserve the better reading and MT is a result of scribal error.

An additional example can be found in the same chapter. (slide) In MT-Gen 2:4, the pair שמים and ארץ, “heaven and earth,” appears in both halves of the verse in a different order: in the first half, השמים והארץ and in the second ארץ ושמים. The SP harmonizes the order of “heaven and earth” in both appearances.

(slide) Another example – the variant readings of the two versions of the Sabbath commandment in MT – זכור את יום השבת in Exod, and שמור את יום השבת in Deut – are harmonized in SP to שמור את יום השבת in both versions.

## 2.2 Clarifying Small Additions

Throughout SP we find minor glosses or expansions that were interpolated in the text to improve its coherence. In Exod 14:12, the Israelites complain to Moses: (slide) הלא זה הדבר אשר דברנו אליך במצרים לאמר חדל ממנו ונעבדה את מצרים כי טוב לנו עבד את מצרים ממתנו במדבר. However, we find no such earlier statement made by the Israelites. To avoid a citation that is not recorded earlier, SP cites the people’s words, as they appear here, after Exod 6:9.

Another example: (slide) according to MT and SP Gen 15:13, the Israelites will be enslaved in Egypt for four hundred years. Nonetheless, MT-Exod 12:40 states: “The length of time that the Israelites lived in Egypt was four hundred *and thirty years*.” To validate the promise in Genesis without refuting the total number in Exodus, SP expands the counting of the years in Exodus by minor additions in the verse (slide): The length of the time that the Israelites *and their fathers* lived in *the Land of Canaan and the Land of* Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.

## 2.3 Substitution of Rare Words or Forms for More Familiar Ones

Rare words or forms are replaced by familiar ones in SP. (slide) This principle occurs in the replacement of a *hapax legomenon*, as in the case of the *hapax* סותה in MT-Gen 49:11 which is replaced with כסותו in SP. (slide) Moreover, SP omits the paragogic *i* in the phrase שוכני סנה (Deut 33:16) and reads שכן סנה, “inhabitant of a bush.” It also omits the ancient case ending in the phrase וחיתו ארץ and reads וחית הארץ, “animals of the earth” (Gen 1:24). (slide) Similarly, rare orthographic forms are replaced by common forms, as seen in the slide (Gen 9:20; 12:8; 13:3; 35:12; Gen 49:11; נער Gen 24:14, 16, 28).

## 2.4 Linguistic Emendations

SP tends to insert linguistic emendations where a subject and predicate in MT are inconsistent in number and/or gender. There are many examples of this phenomenon, some of them can be seen on the slide (Gen 13:6; 31:9; 49:15; Num 9:6).

Emanuel Tov has pointed out that many of the minor variants mentioned here are shared with LXX, indicating their presence in the *Vorlage* of LXX. Put differently, these variants were inserted into the text before its translation into Greek. We will reconsider the developmental history of the textual traditions of the Torah in light of the accumulating evidence from the ancient textual witnesses in the next sessions, after examining the textual evidence from the Qumran scrolls.

Given the editing that the textual tradition represented by SP had undergone, and in light of the abundance of emendations, omissions, glosses, which are obviously secondary readings, scholars failed to appreciate the significance of SP for the textual criticism of the Pentateuch. This statement is certainly true for the early SP research from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, but this view of SP was maintained by some scholars until recently. In early 1990, Bruce Walkte contended that “SP is of a little value for establishing original readings” of the Pentateuch. This conclusion is no longer reasonable. Scholars apparently under the influence of the overall characterization of SP as textually inferior to MT were biased in their evaluation of the text in specific cases. It turns out that in certain cases SP preserves better readings than MT, such as in Gen 4:8, where MT appears to be corrupted and lacks the words נלכה השדה that appear in SP and are reflected also in LXX. In Gen 10:4, SP’s רדנים (which appears also in the parallel genealogical list in MT-1Chr) is preferable to MT’s דדנים. In a recent paper, based on my doctoral dissertation that dealt with variants due to graphic similarity between MT and SP, I have shown that with respect to these variants, SP preserves preferable readings in an equal number to those in MT.

The value of SP for Biblical studies is not limited to the preferable readings that it preserves. SP is an important resource for understanding the growth of the text of the Pentateuch in the late Second Temple period and for understanding the processes that the scriptural text underwent during its transmission. These processes illustrate the ways that scribes felt free to intervene in the text and the practices that they used to improve it when passing it to the next generation.

# The Socio-Historical Background of the Formation of SP

The scholarly discussion of the socio-historical background of the formation of the pre-Samaritan tradition has recently taken a new direction. SP was deemed a popular or vulgar text practically from the moment that it aroused scholarly attention. This view dominated for many years. Moshe Greenberg, for instance, argued that SP represented a popular textual tradition that was later rejected by the academic scribes of the proto-Masoretic text. This idea, to some extent, informed the earlier works of Paul Kahle and Shemaryahu Talmon. Emanuel Tov has also argued that the pre-Samaritan tradition reflects a popular textual tradition of the Pentateuch. However, in a paper from 2013, Jonathan Ben-Dov convincingly characterized the scribal activity of the pre-Samaritan tradition as an academic endeavor. Ben-Dov claimed that the duplications in the pre-Samaritan tradition were the product of trained scholars who were motivated by a desire to bring the text to perfection. Ben-Dov pointed to similar literary techniques used in contemporary Hellenistic literature, chiefly by the Alexandrian scholars of Homer.

# The Transmission of SP

The final form of SP apparently emerged in the late second century BCE. This estimation is based on various considerations: (1) a paleographic analysis of the development of the Samaritan script by James Purvis. (2) The Qumran evidence: the 4QExod-Levf scroll, dated to the middle of the third century BCE, indicates that the pre-Samaritan tradition existed at this period. At the same time, pre-Samaritan scrolls from the first century BCE, namely 4QNumb and 4QRP, reflect more extensive editorial work than is reflected in SP. The expansions that are not documented in SP were presumably inserted into these scrolls after SP branched from the pre-Samaritan tradition and became a sectarian text. (3) Stefan Schorch has shown that the Samaritan reading tradition of SP reflects a linguistic dialect that can be traced to the second century BCE.

SP was transmitted textually and orally in parallel. Nevertheless, the Samaritan reading tradition was surprisingly not fully documented until the last century, when Zeev Ben-Hayyim published a full transcription of the Samaritan reading tradition, accompanied by a comprehensive grammar of Samaritan Hebrew. In 1998, Israel Sadaka, a member of the Samaritan community, produced a fully vocalized edition of SP in order to preserve the reading tradition, as well as for the research of Ben-Hayyim. Ben-Hayyim’s monumental work demonstrates that the Samaritan reading tradition preserves ancient readings and reflects a Hebrew dialect used in the late Second Temple period. It refutes the claim of the contemporary German scholar, Rudolph Machuch, who argued that the reading tradition is a late development influenced by the Samaritans’ adoption of Arabic in the eleventh century.

As opposed to the Samaritan textual tradition, the Samaritan reading tradition is highly stable. Ben-Hayyim, in his preface to Sadaka’s edition of SP, comments (slide): “The hundreds of known manuscripts of SP’s text are different one from the other in their spelling in numerous instances… Therefore, one encounters differences in the various manuscripts of the Samaritan text regarding the spelling, while the reading is always the same.” The stability of the reading tradition, in contrast to the plurality and vitality of the textual tradition, is a compelling reason to highlight the importance of the reading tradition, not only as a source of evidence for the spoken language among the Samaritans in the late Second Temple period but also for the text of SP.

Textual transmission of Hebrew texts is essentially ambiguous and often accumulates several readings. The reading tradition contains vocalization and punctuation, thus determining a specific sense for the text. The importance of the additional information supplied by the reading tradition was widely illustrated by Stefan Schorch. I will mention here just two examples among many to make my point. The first concerns vocalization and the second, punctuation.

1) (slide) The first example is a case of a divergent vocalization, found in Gen 2:7, in the account of God’s creation of the man from dust. After the introductory “The God formed the man from the dust of the earth,” MT states ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים, “He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” According to this reading, the verb ויפח is in *Qal* stem. According to the Samaritan reading, the verb is pronounced *wyabba*, presenting the Samaritan Hebrew equivalent to וַיַּפַּח, (a result of *pe-bet* and *he-het* interchange due to phonological similarity). Thus, the Samaritan reading presents the verb with the *Hiph’il* stem, meaning is “He let breathe in his nostrils the breath of life.”

Although both texts present God as the creator of man from dust, they imply different anthropological concepts. According to MT, the ﬁrst man consisted of two distinct components: a body made from dust, and “the breath of life,” which originated directly with God. According to SP, however, “the breath of life” is not a separate entity, but merely a function of the body, which was commenced by God. Thus, the different vocalization of one word of the consonantal framework led to two distinct, coexistent texts.

2) (slide) The following example demonstrates the implications of *divergent punctuation* on the sense of the text. In Exod 19:24, Moses is commanded to ascend Mount Sinai bringing Aaron with him, while the priests and the people are forbidden to come too close to the summit. Many SP manuscripts, however, present an *afsaq* (full stop, equivalent to סוף פסוק in MT) above the word והכהנים, rendering the phrase אתה ואהרן עמך והכהנים as one syntactical unit. The different punctuations imply two different conceptions of the priesthood, especially concerning two questions: whether the priests had immediate access to the revelation at Mount Sinai; and whether they are to be regarded as part of the Israelite people or as a separate group.

These examples demonstrate that the consonantal framework is full of gaps that had to be filled in while reading. They stress the importance of the Samaritan reading tradition and the role it plays in creating a text in the proper sense of the word.

# Samaritan Manuscript Culture

As with MT, the earliest preserved manuscripts of SP are from the medieval period (slide). There are six complete manuscripts of SP, two in the British Library in London, and others in Nablus, Dublin, Paris, and Washington. There are an additional fifteen very well-preserved manuscripts that lack numerous folia. All of the manuscripts have been dated from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries CE. These medieval manuscripts are written in the Samaritan script, which diverged from Hebrew script approximately in the second century BCE (slide).

As mentioned above, scholars have paid relatively little attention to Samaritan manuscript culture, concentrating instead on more stimulating aspects of Samaritan studies, like theology, history, literature, and language. The works of Alan Crown and Reinhard Pummer are exceptions to this rule. The material philology of the manuscripts is a primary source of evidence for the investigation of Samaritan scribal practices and the transmission of SP. The study of these manuscripts within the broader context of the study of medieval Masoretic manuscripts teases out both commonalities as well as regional features of each manuscript group and scribal circle. In the following, I will elaborate on several Samaritan scribal practices as they are reflected in the Pentateuchal manuscripts.

The main medium for the medieval manuscripts is codices, but there are also scrolls, such as the famous Abisha scroll of Deuteronomy from Nablus. This manuscript is attributed by the Samaritans to Abisha, the great-grandson of Aaron, brother of Moses, who lived in the time of Joshua, but scholars agree that it is from the fourteenth century CE.

(slide) The manuscripts are ruled with vertical lines, to mark the beginning and the end of lines, as well as horizontal lines that serve as ceiling lines on which the letters are hung. The columns contain top, bottom, and intercolumnar margins. The top and bottom margins are generally similar throughout the manuscript.

In general, one can say that the traditions of laying out the text on the column of the scroll, which was adopted for the layout of the codex, were similar to those of Jewish scribes. Fraser observes that “the proportions of the single wide column resembles those of the scrolls from Qumran more closely than the narrow columns of the Greek uncial manuscripts of the bible or the HB codices of the Tiberian Masoretes.” like most of the paleo-Hebrew scrolls from Qumran, SP manuscripts use dots as word dividers.

SP manuscripts contain signs for vocalization, punctuation, and text-critical remarks; the first two probably reflect the existence of public reading of the Torah. Not much can be said about these signs, as no systematic research has been devoted to them, but we can confidently say that the Samaritan scribes used punctuation quite profusely, in comparison to vowel and text-critical signs. (slide) The slide before us demonstrates the use of punctuation, as well as vowel and text-critical signs in an exemplar folio of the Dublin manuscript. We can see that the use of punctuation signs is much more frequent on this page. Stefan Schorch has pointed out that the deployment of vowel and punctuation signs is very sparse and does not follow any systematic rules. Samaritan scribal practice may vary within the same manuscript or between different manuscripts written by the same scribe.

Another prominent scribal practice evident in the Samaritan manuscripts is the columnar arrangement of the text, in which similar letters or words appear in a vertical line, one under the other (slide). In texts that use similar wording, like genealogical lists, for instance, this leads to considerable numbers of the same letters and words being written under each other over several consecutive lines. In these cases, words and sentences are often broken for the sake of this unique arrangement. At times there is no clear relationship between the sense of the units and the layout of the text.

A clear example of this phenomenon can be found on the folio of the Dublin manuscript that contains the text of Num 26:41–50, the lists of the tribes Benjamin (called בנימים in SP), Dan, Asher, and Naphtali from the second census (slide). We can observe the clear division into paragraphs. Each tribe is treated in a separate paragraph, all presented in a similar layout. The scribe also took pains to ensure that the letters *lamed* at the beginnings of the lines (slide) and the letters *tav*, *vav*, and *yod* (slide) would be written directly under the same letter occurring in the line above. This is also true for the recurring words למשפחת or למשפחות (slide). This columnar arrangement was secured by separating letters in these words, as well as the transposition of the first letter in the line to the second place, leaving the first space unoccupied.

Edward Robertson believed that columnar writing like this was a scribal art form that aimed to create an ornamental sentence division effect. However, it might be more than a calligraphic art form. Alan Crown claims that columnar writing is a unique and successful way of protecting the text from scribal corruption, such as omissions of phrases in places when identical phrases or words are repeated, as well as contamination from the Jewish version of the text. Crown demonstrates that this writing had its origins in an ancient Samaritan masoretic tradition. Despite the variation in the use of columnar writing by the Samaritan scribes, the evidence indicates that there were some pericopes in SP that indeed had standard layouts and forms of copying.

The last term that I would like to mention in the context of Samaritan manuscript culture is the *tashqil*. *Tashqil* is a sophisticated practice that isolates letters from the text along an empty path in the middle of the folio. The letters, read from top to bottom, form the scribe’s name accompanied by other details, such as the place and time of the manuscript’s writing. For instance, the Dublin manuscript presents a large *tashqil* that extends over the first sixteen pages of the book of Deuteronomy (slide, fols. 258a-265a, Deut 1:1–4:8), the first of which is seen in the slide. The *tashqil* reveals that the manuscript was written by the scribe Abi Barakatah, in his fifties, in 1225 CE.

Sometimes the *tashqil* not only supplies the reader with personal data, but also “Masoretic” notes:חצי תורה, “halfway through the Torah” (in Lev 7:15), or religious slogans, such as ה' גיבור במלחמה. It should be noted that *tashqil* is not unique to Pentateuchal manuscripts, and is documented in other Samaritan texts as well, in different forms and wordings.

The *tashqil* could also be used to create a sort of illustration. We can see in the slide before us a folio in the Dublin manuscript that describes the borders of the Promised Land (Num 34). It is shaped according to the Samaritan conception of the Holy Land: Mount Gerizim at the center, surrounded by four parts according to the four points of the compass.

# Editions

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, a number of critical editions of SP have appeared. Most are diplomatic editions based on a single manuscript, but not all of them. In what follows, I shall review the major editions and conclude by discussing a new comprehensive edition of the SP.

## 6.1 August von Gall’s Edition (1914–1918), Der Hebräische Der Samaritane

The purpose of this edition was to create an eclectic reconstruction of SP. Von Gall collected a large number of manuscripts, evaluated their relative values, and labored to recover the earliest and best reading. (slide) The edition contains the main text and three critical apparatuses: one addresses the consonantal framework, a second the vowel signs, and a third (the largest), the punctuation signs.

The main strength of this edition, which was the most prominent critical edition of SP until the late twentieth century, is the cumulative apparatuses 2 and 3. They tally the evidence of vowel signs and punctuation in all of the manuscripts employed in this edition. However, von Gall’s edition has several weaknesses. The first is that it does not include all the medieval manuscripts of SP. Perhaps more importantly, its criteria for the evaluation of the textual evidence are unscientific. Von Gall had a predilection for choosing readings that agree with MT, rather than choosing the readings that best represent SP tradition. In addition, he was insufficiently appreciative of how the grammar of Samaritan Hebrew differs from that of Masoretic Hebrew. These failures adversely affected the quality of the main text of this eclectic edition.

## 6.2 Tal and Florentin, The Pentateuch: The Samaritan Version and the Masoretic Version

This is a diplomatic edition published by Abraham Tal in 1994 based on one of the most important and most complete manuscripts of SP, manuscript number six from the Samaritan synagogue of Nablus. This manuscript is poorly preserved in places and parts at the beginning and the end of the Pentateuch were torn away. Tal supplemented its testimony utilizing textual evidence from other SP manuscripts. By the way, the most extensive part that was ripped off from this manuscript has been found here in Oxford, in the Bodleian Libraries’ collection.

In 2010, Abraham Tal and Moshe Florentin published an improved edition of the Nablus manuscript, along with the MT on facing pages to facilitate convenient comparison between the two texts (slide). The edition marks expansions in SP and presents these in a separate index. In addition, the corresponding MT has blank spaces in those instances where SP has expanded text.

The editors have produced a convenient, accessible, and useful synoptic edition of SP and MT. What this edition does not offer, however, is any information about the multitude of other textual witnesses to SP, nor the parallels with other Biblical witnesses. The Tal-Florentin edition is used in the Accordance module of SP.

## 6.3 The Samaritan Pentateuch: A Critical Editio Maior

A concerted effort is currently underway to produce a comprehensive critical editionof SP. Editions of the books of Genesis and Leviticus have been already prepared and published by Stefan Schorch and his team at the University of Halle-Wittenberg and further volumes of the books of Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are in preparation.

Like the Tal-Florentin’s edition, the new critical edition is a diplomatic one. The core text is the Dublin manuscript, which is one of the best preserved and most carefully produced SP manuscripts. The edition consists of the main text, a list of the extant manuscripts dating from the eleventh to fourteenth centuries for the respective passages, and of five apparatuses. Not all of the apparatuses appear on every page, depending on the manuscript evidence. (slide) The main text records the consonantal framework, paragraphing, punctuation, vowels, and text-critical signs. The few corrections found in that manuscript, all of which were evidently implemented by the scribe himself, are not indicated in the main text. Instead, it follows the corrected reading in these cases, with the variants appearing in apparatus 1. (slide) For instance, in Lev 18:12–13 the scribe first wrote the words אביך; ערות and corrected himself afterward by adding the word היא above the line, between the two words. The base text of the edition contains the corrected reading אביך; היא; ערות and apparatus 1 indicates that the word היא is the result of an emendation.

In the inner margins of the main text, the editors provide information from the Samaritan reading tradition in cases where the consonantal framework of the main text is ambiguous. This feature of the new edition provides critical information for those cases where the text can be read in different ways and the traditional Samaritan vocalization differs from that of MT.

(slide) Apparatus 1 lists the variants within the consonantal framework, including corrections or additions by later hands, erasures, and so forth. The importance of this apparatus lies in the fact that no canonized written form of SP exists in the sense that it does in the Masoretic tradition. In Samaritan tradition, scribes have been allowed significant freedom, as long as they remain firmly within the bounds of the orally transmitted reading tradition. For this reason, the scribal transmission of SP is generally much more diverse than that of the relatively conservative MT.

(slide) Apparatus 2 lists and explains those cases in which the ancient translations of SP, that is, the Samaritan Targum and the Samaritan Arabic translation of the Pentateuch, attest to a Hebrew *Vorlage* that differs from the Dublin manuscript. In each instance, the editors refer to the original, whether Aramaic or Arabic, and reconstruct the Hebrew *Vorlage*.

(slide) Apparatus 3 lists all instances of vowel and text-critical signs found in the manuscripts of SP covered by the edition. This apparatus is not comparative but rather cumulative in that it records the entire evidence of vowel and text-critical signs found in the manuscripts covered by the apparatus, irrespective of the reading evidence found in the main text.

(slide) Apparatus 4 is particularly valuable for the comparison of SP with other ancient witnesses. It provides parallels between the Hebrew Samaritan text and textual witnesses outside of the Masoretic tradition, especially from the LXX and the DSS.

(slide) Apparatus 5 is devoted to punctuation and lists all variants found in the manuscripts covered by the edition. Recording this evidence is important for understanding paragraphing and syntax.

The new edition is a major contribution to the study of SP in particular, and to the study of the Pentateuch in general. For the first time, readers have access to full documentation of SP’s text, the distribution of readings, and the particulars of the Samaritan manuscript tradition. It is a superb instrument for Biblical scholars.

To conclude, today’s session focused on the Samaritan Pentateuch, a sectarian text that preserves a textual tradition and spoken language that can be traced back to the second century BCE. Our discussion detailed the textual characterization of SP, its written and oral transmission, its manuscript culture, and a review of the modern editions. The latter are the basic tools for Samaritan studies and the way that Biblical scholars can become acquainted with SP.

A discussion of SP is incomplete without an in-depth study of the pre-Samaritan manuscripts, which attest to the ancient tradition on which SP is based. Indeed, from a diachronic point of view, we started our study of the pre-Samaritan tradition with its latest exemplar, SP. In the next sessions, we will elaborate on the pre-Samaritan manuscripts, their proximity to SP, and their contribution to our knowledge of SP-group tradition and its origins. This study will hopefully shed new light on the textual history of the Pentateuch.