**Abstract**

This study focuses on variant readings due to graphical similarity between the Masoretic text and the Samaritan Pentateuch. Its first and foremost aim is to create a comprehensive corpus of all these variants, to study each one independently and to examine them from a broad perspective. The data will be analyzed using tools available to all scholars of the biblical text. Yet in addition, the study incorporates tools from the palaeographic realm and in this respect, it marks a new direction. The many researchers who have dealt with variations caused by graphic similarities as part of the discussion of the history of textual versions have made little use of knowledge that has accrued over the past decades on the development of the Hebrew script and the square script to explain specific phenomena or general processes. Therefore, my work will add to the study of textual criticism in all its dimensions and to the study of the bible itself.

Following an **introduction** to the study which includes its aims, a review of research on relevant topics and an outline, the **second chapter** presents the textual findings. This chapter surveys all the differences between the Masoretic text and the Samaritan Pentateuch caused by graphic similarities and explores versions of additional textual witnesses, primarily the Qumran scrolls and the Septuagint. Each variation is examined independently through a philological analysis of the different versions, their process of development and their appraisal. Finally, the chapter presents a statistical analysis of the data, including, for example, a survey of the interchanging letters, the frequency of the changes, the number of preferred versions in each textual witness and the frequency of agreement between the Septuagint and each textual witness.

The **third chapter** treats the palaeographic background of the variants and examines the shapes of the interchanging letters during each stage of development of the three relevant writing systems – Hebrew script, square script and Samaritan script. Through this process it determines an estimated chronological context for the variations, that is, it identifies the stage of graphic development in which similarity between the letters exists and when it is reasonable to presume the changes occurred. The intermediate summary of this chapter relays the statistical data that emerges from the palaeographic analysis: the number of variations between the Masoretic text and the Samaritan Pentateuch in each system of writing, the number of variations occurring in each phase of the script’s development and an approximate chronological context for the overall variations. The data shed light on the process of transmitting the Torah in the final centuries before the Common Era.

The **fourth chapter** is devoted to the conclusions of the study. This chapter discusses the contribution of the intermediate conclusions that arise from the textual findings and palaeographic analysis to scholarship on adjacent subjects. Some of the conclusions concern the Samaritan Pentateuch specifically (its dating, the letters in which it was transmitted, the nature of its transmission), while others relate more broadly to textual criticism of Hebrew Scripture, illustrating the relation between the textual witnesses discussed and the chronological framework of the Pentateuch’s transmission in Hebrew script.

As an **appendix**, the work offers a list of the differences between the Masoretic text and the Samaritan Pentateuch that are caused by graphic similarities. The variations are presented in a chart form that concentrates all the data arising from the collected texts and from the analysis of each variation: The preferred version (if one exists); which version is supported by the Septuagint (if at all); and whether a record of the variation exists in the *Ketiv* and *Qere* of the Masoretic text.